



## News Analysis (25 Jun, 2020)

[drishtiias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/25-06-2020/print](https://drishtiias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/25-06-2020/print)

### India TB Report 2020

#### Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has launched the **annual Tuberculosis (TB) Report 2020**.

**Eliminating TB by 2025:** India is committed to **eliminating tuberculosis from the country by 2025**, five years ahead of the global target by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** i.e. 2030.

**National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme:** To align with the ambitious goal, the programme has been renamed from the **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) to National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)**.

#### Key Points

- **State TB Index:** On the basis of the score in State **TB** Index, **Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh** were the top three best-performing states for tuberculosis control under the category of states with 50 lakh population.
  - **Tripura and Nagaland** were best-performing in the category of states having less than 50 lakh population.
  - **Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu** were selected as the best performing Union Territories.
- **Rising Tobacco Consumption:** It also revealed that Tobacco consumption is rising among Indian TB patients.
  - **8% of TB cases** can be attributable to tobacco usage.

- **HIV Patients and TB:** People **living with HIV are the most vulnerable** among all those TB patient groups which have other comorbidities (rate of death). Hence, the World Health Organization lays social emphasis (through awareness programmes) on them.

**HIV-associated TB:** India accounts for **9% of all HIV-associated TB deaths** in the world, the **second-highest number** globally.

- A total of 92,000 HIV-associated TB patients were recorded on an annual basis.
  - Awareness among TB patients about their HIV status has gone up to 81% from 67%.
- **Diabetes Associated TB:** The other such group is patients suffering from **diabetes**. According to the report, 20% of all TB cases in India also suffer from diabetes.

In 2019, among the notified TB patients under the Revised National TB Control Programme, 64 % were screened for Diabetes.

- **Missing Patients:** The report highlighted that the notification of TB is a major hurdle in surveillance of the disease in India.

Nearly **0.54 million TB cases** are still missing across India.

- **Lower Reporting than WHO:** According to the report, India notified the highest number of **24.04 lakh tuberculosis cases** last year (2018) as **against an estimated 26.9 lakh cases by WHO**, indicating that around three lakh patients missed out from the national TB programme.

**Low Fatality:** It stated that 79,144 deaths due to tuberculosis were reported in 2019, which is much lower than the WHO estimate of 4.4 lakh fatalities.

- **Treatment Success Rate:** It is around 70-73% in the last two years. From 2014-2016, it was between 76 and 77%.

## Initiatives by India

---

- **The Nikshay Ecosystem:** It is the National TB information system which is a one-stop solution to manage information of patients and monitor program activity and performance throughout the country.
- **Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY):** This scheme is aimed at providing financial support to TB patients for their nutrition.
- **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign: Launched In September 2019** it is showcasing the highest level of commitment for the elimination of TB.
- **The Saksham Project:** It is a project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) that has been providing psycho-social counselling to DR-TB patients.

## Tuberculosis

- TB is caused by **bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*)** that most often affect the lungs.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- **Symptoms:** Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:** TB is a treatable and curable disease. It is treated with a standard 6-month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
- **Anti-TB medicines** have been used for decades and strains that are resistant to 1 or more of the medicines have been documented in every country surveyed.
  - **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
  - **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.

## Way Forward

---

- Despite the notable successes achieved by the different programmes, robust efforts are needed to improve the early and **accurate diagnosis** followed by a prompt appropriate treatment which is vital for **ending TB**.
- India must collaborate with **global efforts which are being done to eliminate** the TB along with the **paradigm shift in the control measure**.
- There is a need for expanding both the laboratory network as well as diagnostic facilities to cover the entire country under the National TB Elimination Programme. There is a requirement of the crucial contribution from the private sector in terms of providing mandatory tuberculosis notification and quality care.
- There is a need to fight the stigma surrounding it so that every TB patient can seek care with dignity and without discrimination. Hence, **advocacy, communication & social mobilization** is vital.

**Source: DTE**

---

## Interest Subvention Scheme for Shishu Loan Accounts

---

### Why in News

---

The government has approved a **2% interest subsidy scheme for Shishu loan account holders** under the **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**.

The Scheme will help small businesses tide over difficulties created by the lockdown following **Covid-19 outbreak**.

## **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana**

- PMMY is a scheme launched by the government in **2015** for providing **loans up to Rs. 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro-enterprises**.
- **MUDRA**, which stands for **Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd.**, is a financial institution set up by the Government to provide funding to the non-corporate small business sector through various last-mile financial institutions like Banks, **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** and Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs).

MUDRA does not lend directly to micro-entrepreneurs/individuals.

- Under the aegis of PMMY, **MUDRA has created three products** i.e. 'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun' as per the stage of growth and funding needs of the beneficiary micro unit.
  - **Shishu:** Covering loans up to Rs. 50,000.
  - **Kishore:** Covering loans above Rs. 50,000 and up to Rs. 5 lakh
  - **Tarun:** Covering loans above Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs. 10 lakh
- Loans under this scheme are **collateral-free loans**.

## **Key Points**

---

- **In-Line with Atmanirbhar Abhiyan:**

The **2% Interest Subsidy Scheme** is in line with the measures announced relating to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.
- **Eligibility:**
  - The scheme will be extended to loans which meet the following criteria: **outstanding as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020; and not in Non-Performing Asset (NPA) category**, as per the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** guidelines on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and during the period of operation of the Scheme.
  - The interest subsidy would be payable for the months in which the accounts are not in NPA category including for the months that the account becomes a performing asset again, after turning NPA.
  - The scheme will incentivize people who will make regular repayments of loans.

- **Implementation:**
  - The Scheme will be implemented through the **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** and will be in **operation for 12 months**.
    - SIDBI was set up on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1990 under an Act of the Parliament.
    - It acts as the Principal Financial Institution for Promotion, Financing and Development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector as well as for coordination of functions of institutions engaged in similar activities.
  - For borrowers, who have been allowed a **moratorium** by their respective lenders, as permitted by RBI under the ‘**Covid-19 Regulatory Package**’, the Scheme would commence post completion of the moratorium period till a period of 12 months i.e. from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 till 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021. For other borrowers, the scheme would commence w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 and will last till 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021.
- **Cost to the Government:** The estimated cost of the Scheme would be approximately **Rs. 1,542 crore**.
- **Background:**
  - The ongoing Covid-19 crisis and the consequent lockdown has led to severe disruption of business for micro and small enterprises which are funded through Shishu Mudra loans.
  - Small businesses typically function on thin operating margins, and the current lockdown has had a severe impact on their cash flows, jeopardizing their ability to service their loans.
  - This could lead to default in repayment and have a resultant impact on access to institutional credit in future.
  - As on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, about 9.37 crore loan accounts under the Shishu category of PMMY with a total loan amount of about Rs 1.62 Lakh crore, were outstanding.

## Way Forward

---

- The Scheme is expected to provide much-needed relief to the MSME sector, thereby enabling small businesses to continue functioning without laying off employees due to lack of funds.
- By supporting small businesses to continue functioning during these times of crisis, the Scheme is expected to have a positive impact on the economy and support its revival, which is necessary for employment generation in future.

**Source: PIB**

---

# Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: UNESCO

---

## Why in News

---

Recently, the **Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020** was released by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** (UNESCO).

It highlighted that **Covid-19** had worsened the inequalities in education systems worldwide.

## Key Points

---

- **Global Findings:**

- During the height of school closures in April 2020, almost 91% of students around the world were out of school.
- About 40% of low and lower middle income countries have not supported learners at risk of exclusion during this crisis, such as the poor, linguistic minorities and learners with disabilities.
- Education systems responded with distance learning solutions, all of which offered less or more imperfect substitutes for classroom instruction.
- Poorer countries opted for radio and television (TV) lessons, 55% of low-income, 73% of lower-middle-income and 93% of upper-middle-income countries adopted for online learning platforms for primary and secondary education.
- 17% of low and middle-income countries are planning to recruit more teachers, 22% to increase class time and 68% to introduce remedial classes when schools reopen to combat the situation.

- **India Specific Findings:**

India has used a mix of all three systems (radio, TV and online platforms) for educational continuity.

- **Challenges:**
  - **Governments increasingly rely on technology** but the **digital divide limits** the approach because not all students and teachers have access to an adequate internet connection, equipment, skills and working conditions to take advantage of available platforms.
  - **School closures interrupt support mechanisms for various disadvantaged students.**
    - Resources for **blind and deaf students** may not be available outside schools.
    - **Children with learning disabilities** or those who are on the **autism** spectrum may struggle with independent work in front of a computer or the disruption of daily school routines.
    - **Poor students** who depend on school for free meals or even free sanitary napkins have suffered.
  - **Cancellation of examinations** in many countries, including India, may result in **scoring dependent on teachers' judgements** of students instead, which could be **affected by stereotypes** of certain types of students.
  - **Higher drop-out rates** are also a concern because, during an earlier **Ebola epidemic in Africa**, many older girls never returned to school once the crisis was over.

## Way Forward

---

- Teachers who are intimidated by technology now have to take the bull by its horns. For many who are proficient at planning and teaching in the traditional classroom, planning for an online setting requires some re-learning.
- Online classrooms have brought up issues of classroom management and it is needed to learn methods of managing remote classes and students online. Schools also have to give serious thought to planning and conducting online assessments and evaluations.
- School readiness for online teaching is critical and schools are at varying levels in this journey. While parents are worried about having the right hardware and set-up at home, school management and teachers are sorting out more significant and vital issues.

### **Source: TH**

---

## Extension to OBC Sub-Categorisation Commission

---

### Why in News

---

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved a six-month extension to the commission appointed to examine **sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes** (OBCs), up to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

## Key Points

---

- **Commission:**

- **Headed by Justice (Retd.) G Rohini**, the commission was constituted under **Article 340 of the Constitution** with the approval of the President on **2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017**.

Article 340 deals with the **appointment of a commission** to investigate the conditions of backward classes.

- It had been constituted to **complete the task of sub-categorising 5000-odd castes in the central OBC list** so as to **ensure more equitable distribution of opportunities** in central government jobs and educational institutions.
- In 2015, the **National Commission for Backward Classes** (NCBC) had recommended that OBCs should be **categorised into extremely backward classes, more backward classes and backward classes**.
  - The benefits of the **reservation** in OBCs are being cornered mostly by the dominant OBC groups over the years so there is a need to recognise sub-quotas for the extremely backward classes within the OBCs.
  - NCBC has the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.
- **Mandate:**
  - **Examine the uneven distribution of reservation benefits** among different castes in the central OBC list. For example, certain castes were left out of the ambit because of a difference in spelling in a State.
  - **Work out mechanism and parameters for sub-categorisation of OBCs**, to identify castes, sub-castes and communities and classify them into sub-categories.
  - **Submit a comprehensive report** after consultation with various stakeholders so that **Census 2021** can include comprehensive data on OBCs.
- **Work Done:**

It has met representatives of state governments, state backward classes commissions, community associations etc. apart from obtaining caste-wise data of OBCs in higher educational institutions and recruits in central departments, public sector banks and financial institutions.
- **Expenditure:**

The expenditure related to the administration costs will be continued to be borne by the **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment**.



- **Reasons for Extension:**

- The Commission would **require more time to submit its report** since the repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription etc. appearing in the existing Central List of OBCs need to be cleared.
- Apart from that, the **nationwide lockdown** and restrictions on travel imposed in the wake of **Covid-19 pandemic** slowed down the commission's performance.

- **Possible Outcomes:**

The commission may **make recommendations which will benefit the communities in the existing list of OBCs** which have not been able to get any major benefit of the OBCs reservation scheme for appointment in central government posts and for admission in central government educational institutions.

## **Article 340 of the Indian Constitution**

- The President may by order appoint a Commission consisting of such persons as he thinks fit to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any State to remove such difficulties and to improve their condition and as to the grants that should be made for the purpose by the Union or any State and the conditions subject to which such grants should be made, and the order appointing such Commission shall define the procedure to be followed by the Commission.
- A Commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and present to the President a report setting out the facts as found by them and making such recommendations as they think proper.
- The President shall cause a copy of the report so presented together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before each House of Parliament.

## **OBC Reservation**

- The **Kalelkar Commission**, set up in **1953**, was the **first to identify backward classes** other than the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at the national level.
- The **Mandal Commission Report, 1980** estimated the OBC population at 52% and classified 1,257 communities as backward.
  - It **recommended increasing the existing quotas**, which were only for SC/ST, from 22.5% to 49.5% to include the OBCs.

- The central government reserved **27% of seats in union civil posts and services** for OBCs [**Article 16(4)**]. The quotas were **subsequently enforced in central government educational institutions [Article 15 (4)]**.

In 2008, the Supreme Court directed the central government to exclude the creamy layer (advanced sections) among the OBCs.

- The **102<sup>nd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act, 2018** provided **constitutional status** to the **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**, which was previously a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.

**Source: PIB**

---

## Co-operative Banks Under RBI Supervision

---

### Why In News

---

Recently, the Central government approved an **Ordinance** to bring **all urban and multi-state co-operative banks** under the direct supervision of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.

### Key Points

---

- **Reason:**
  - The decision comes after several instances of **fraud and serious financial irregularities**, including the major scam at the **Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank** in 2019.
  - Till now, all the co-operative banks **came under dual regulation of the RBI and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies**, resulting in regulatory and supervisory lapses at many of these banks.
    - The RBI had no powers to draw up an enforceable scheme of reconstruction of a co-operative bank.
    - However, from now onwards the urban and multi-state co-operative will come under the direct supervision of RBI.

- **Benefit:**
  - The move will **empower the RBI to regulate** all urban and multi-state co-operative banks **on the lines of commercial banks**.
    - Earlier, the **Supreme Court pronounced** that co-operative banks come within the definition of ‘Banks’ under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 for the purposes of the Sarfaesi Act, 2002.
    - The Sarfaesi Act is an effective tool for bad loans **(Non-Performing Assets)** recovery.
  - It will also provide **more security to depositors**.
    - In India, there are 1482 urban co-operatives banks and 58 multi-state co-operative banks.
    - These banks have a depositor base of 8.6 crores, who have saved a huge amount of Rs. 4.84 lakh crore with these banks.
- **Issues Involved:**
  - The **rural co-operative banks will continue to remain under the dual regulation** of RBI and Registrar of Co-operative Societies.
  - The rural co-operative banks face the same issue of misgovernance and fraud, like urban co-operatives banks.

## Co-operative Banking

- A **Co-operative bank** is a financial entity which belongs to its members, who are at the same time the owners and the customers of their bank. It is **distinct from commercial banks**.
- They are broadly **classified into Urban and Rural co-operative banks** based on their region of operation.
- They are registered under the **Co-operative Societies Act of the State concerned** or under the **Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002**.
- The Co-operative banks are also **governed by the**
  - Banking Regulations Act, 1949.
  - Banking Laws (Co-operative Societies) Act, 1955.

- **Features of Co-operative Banks:**

- **Customer Owned Entities:** Co-operative bank members are both customer and owner of the bank.
- **Democratic Member Control:** These banks are owned and controlled by the members, who democratically elect a board of directors. Members usually have equal voting rights, according to the cooperative principle of “one person, one vote”.
- **Profit Allocation:** A significant part of the yearly profit, benefits or surplus is usually allocated to constitute reserves and a part of this profit can also be distributed to the co-operative members, with legal and statutory limitations.
- **Financial Inclusion:** They have played a significant role in the financial inclusion of unbanked rural masses. They provide cheap credit to masses in rural areas.

**Source: IE**

---

## Private Sector Participation in Space

---

### Why in News

---

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the creation of the **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)** to provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.

This is part of reforms aimed at giving a **boost to private sector participation** in the entire range of space activities.

### Key points

---

- **IN-SPACe:** It will act as a **single-point interface** between **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, and everyone who wants to participate in space-related activities, or use India’s space resources.
  - It will also hand-hold, promote and guide the private industries in space activities through encouraging policies and a friendly regulatory environment.
- **Indian National Space Promotion Board:** It would be set up to strengthen the Department of Space and for the promotion of the private space entrepreneurs or non-government space entrepreneurs,
- **Role of ISRO:** The overall idea is to let ISRO concentrate on essential activities like research and development, planetary exploration, and strategic use of space, while freeing itself from ancillary or routine work which could easily be done by private industry.

- **Demand Driven Model:** By the support of **New Space India Limited (NSIL)**, It would endeavour to reorient space activities from a ‘**supply driven**’ model to a ‘**demand driven**’ one, thereby ensuring **optimum utilisation** of the nation’s space assets.

The main objective of NSIL is to scale up industry participation in Indian space programmes in comparison to **IN-SPACE** which gives emphasis on the participation of the private sector.

## Significance

---

- **Level Playing Field for Private Companies:** IN-SPACE will provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.
- **Research and Development Activities:** These reforms will allow ISRO to focus more on new technologies, exploration missions and **human spaceflight programme**.

Some of the planetary exploration missions will also be opened up to the private sector through an ‘**announcement of opportunity**’ mechanism.

- **Fruitful Dissemination of Space Technologies:** Allowing industries and others like students, researchers or academic bodies greater access to space assets would lead to a much better utilisation of India space resources.
- **Socio-economic use of Space Assets:** The proposed body would attempt to enhance the activities, including access to space assets data and activities
- **Global Technology Powerhouse:** It will enable Indian Industry to be an important player in the global space economy. With this, there is an opportunity for **large-scale employment in the technology sector** and India becoming a Global technology powerhouse.

## New Space India Limited

- NSIL is a **Central Public Sector Enterprise** of the Government of India.
- It was established in 2019 under the administrative control of **the Department of Space**.
- **Headquarter: Bengaluru**
- NSIL is the **commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** with the primary responsibility of enabling Indian industries to take up high technology space related activities and is also responsible for promotion and commercial exploitation of the products and services emanating from the space industry.
- NSIL is incorporated to carry forward the industry production of space systems and the ISRO’s efforts in realising **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles (PSLV)** from industry.

- NSIL differs from ISRO's existing commercial arm **Antrix Corporation**:
  - Antrix will handle **ISRO's commercial deals for satellites** and launch vehicles with foreign customers.
  - NSIL will deal with capacity building of **local industry for space manufacturing**.

## Way Forward

---

- Space sector can **play a major catalytic role** in the technological advancement and expansion of our Industrial base.
- Therefore, the creation of **IN-SPACE** will work towards a greater involvement of private industry, academic institutions and research organisations in India's space sector.
- India is among a handful of countries with advanced capabilities in the space sector. With these reforms, the sector will receive new energy and dynamism, to help the country leapfrog to the next stages of space activities.

**Source: IE**

---

## Ocean Mapping: Seabed 2030 Project

---

### Why in News

---

Recently, it was announced that mapping of nearly one-fifth of the world's ocean floor had been finished under the **Seabed 2030 Project**.

### Key Points

---

- **Seabed 2030 Project:**

- Seabed 2030 is a collaborative project between the **Nippon Foundation of Japan** and the **General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO)**.
- It was launched at the **United Nations Ocean Conference** in June 2017 and is aligned with the UN's **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14** to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.

The United Nations Ocean Conference intended to be a game-changer in reversing the decline in the health of the ocean for people, planet and prosperity.

- The project aims to bring together all available **bathymetric data** to produce the definitive map of the world ocean floor by 2030 and make it available to all.  
Bathymetry is the measurement of the shape and depth of the ocean floor.
- In the past, **satellites and planes carrying altimeter instruments** have been able to provide large swathes of data about the ocean floor.
- However, the Seabed 2030 Project **aims to obtain higher quality information** that has a minimum resolution of 100 metres at all spots, using equipment such as deepwater **hull-mounted sonar systems**, and **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs)**.

- **Importance of the Study of the Ocean Floor:**

- **Helps in understanding several natural phenomena**, including ocean circulation, tides and biological hotspots.
- Provides **key inputs** for navigation, forecasting disasters, exploration for oil and gas projects, building offshore wind turbines, fishing resources, and for laying cables and pipelines.
- Ensure a **better understanding of climate change**.

Climate change has impacted the flow of ocean currents and has led to sea-level rise.

## **General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans**

- GEBCO is the **only** intergovernmental organisation with a mandate to map the entire ocean floor.
- It traces its origins to the GEBCO chart series initiated in 1903 by Prince Albert I of Monaco.
- It aims to **provide the most authoritative publicly-available bathymetry** of the world's oceans.

- It operates under the joint auspices of the **International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)** and the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** (of **UNESCO**).
  - The IHO is an **intergovernmental organization** that works to ensure all the world's seas, oceans and navigable waters are surveyed and charted. It was established in 1921.
  - **India is its member.**
  - The **IHO Secretariat** is hosted by the Principality of **Monaco**.

**Source: IE**

---

## Fishing Cats

---

### Why in News

---

The Odisha Government has started a two-year conservation project for **Fishing Cats** in **Bhitarkanika National Park**.

Like several other rare species, little is known about **fishing cats** in the wild.



### Key Points

- **Scientific Name:** *Prionailurus viverrinus*.
- **Description:**
  - It is twice the size of a house cat.
  - The fishing cat is **nocturnal (active at night)** and apart from fish also preys on frogs, crustaceans, snakes, birds, and scavenges on carcasses of larger animals.
  - The species breed all year round.
  - They spend most of their lives in areas of dense vegetation close to water bodies and are excellent swimmers.



- **Habitat:** 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:**
  - **Habitat Destruction:** A major threat for fishing cats is the destruction of wetlands, their preferred habitat.
  - **Shrimp Farming:** Shrimp farming is another growing threat to **mangrove habitats** of the Fishing Cat.
  - **Hunting:** This unique cat also faces threats from hunting for meat and skin.
  - **Ritual Practices:** Tribal hunters indulge in ritual hunting practices throughout the year.
  - **Poaching:** It is also occasionally poached for its skin.
  - **Poisoning:** Indiscriminate trapping, snaring and poisoning.
- **Protection Status:**
- **Conservation Efforts:**
  - The Fishing Cat Project, launched in 2010 started raising awareness about the Cat in West Bengal.
  - In 2012, the **West Bengal** government officially declared the **Fishing Cat** as the **State Animal** and the Calcutta Zoo has two big enclosures dedicated to them.
  - In Odisha, many NGOs and wildlife conservation Societies are involved in Fishing Cat research and conservation work.

**Source: DTE**

---