



Snow Leopards Spotted in Gangotri National Park | Uttarakhand | 20 May 2024

Why in News?

Recently, a [Snow Leopard](#) was spotted in [Gangotri National Park](#) in **Uttarkashi** district of Uttarakhand.

Key Points

- In the latest [snow leopard census of India](#), released earlier in 2024, there are **718 snow leopards in India**. Out of which, **124 are in Uttarakhand**.
 - The hill state has the second highest snow leopard population in India, after **Ladakh (477)**. The **Gangotri National Park** boasts a population of **38-40 snow leopards**.
 - Listed as **vulnerable on the [IUCN Red List](#)**, it is estimated that the global population of snow leopards is less than 10,000.
- In Uttarakhand, snow leopards are found in **Uttarkashi, Tehri, Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Pithoragarh, and Bageshwar districts**.

Gangotri National Park

- It was established in **1989** and is situated in **Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand** in the **upper catchment of Bhagirathi River**.
- Gaumukh at Gangotri glacier, the **origin of river Ganga**, is located inside the park.
- The park area forms a **viable continuity between Govind National Park and Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **Flora:** The park is enveloped by dense coniferous forests that are mostly temperate. Chirpine, deodar, fir, spruce, oak and rhododendron are the common vegetation.
- **Fauna:** Various rare and endangered species like bharal or blue sheep, black bear, brown bear, himalayan monal, himalayan snowcock, himalayan tahr, musk deer and snow leopard are found in the park.

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Snow Leopard

Panthera Uncia

Often referred to as the "ghost of the mountains"

HABITAT

- Mountainous regions of **Central and Southern Asia**
- **12** Range Countries
- In India:
 - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh
 - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh

MAJOR SITES

- Hemis National Park, Ladakh
 - **Snow leopard capital of the world**
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri National Park, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

PROTECTION STATUS

- **Vulnerable:** IUCN Red List
- **Appendix I:** CITES
- **Schedule I:** Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme
- Himal Sanrakshak- Community Volunteer Programme
- Project Snow Leopard
- Snow Leopard Conservation Breeding Programme- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, West Bengal

THREATS

- Human Snow Leopard Conflict
- Climate Change
- Loss of Prey and Habitat
- Poaching



Chinese Heron Sighted in Uttarakhand | Uttarakhand | 20 May 2024

Why in News?

Recently, The **Chinese Pond Heron**, a bird usually found in the northeastern states, Rajasthan and Bhutan, has been seen for the first time in Uttarakhand.

Key Points

- According to experts, there was no record of the presence of the Chinese Pond Heron in Uttarakhand.
 - For the first time, the bird has chosen the **Kotdwar area of Lansdowne forest** division for breeding.
- Many migratory birds are visible in the dense forests of Saneh area of Kotdwar and Lansdowne forest division during the summer.
 - The **arrival of birds from northeastern states** here is an indication that the environment here is favourable for them.

Chinese Pond Heron



- The Chinese pond heron (*Ardeola bacchus*) is an **East Asian freshwater bird** of the heron family.
 - It is one of six species of birds known as "pond herons" (genus *Ardeola*).
 - It is typically **47 cm (19 in) long with white wings, a yellow bill with a black tip, yellow eyes and legs.**
 - Its overall **colour is red, blue and white during breeding season**, and **greyish-brown and flecked with white at other times.**
 - It is **found in shallow fresh and saltwater wetlands and ponds.**
 - It is **fairly common** and considered a **Least concern (LC)** species by the [IUCN Red List](#).
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Swami Vivekananda National Football Championship | Chhattisgarh | 20 May 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the [Swami Vivekananda U-20 Men's National Football Championships](#) quarter finals were held at the **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Ground, Narainpur, Chhattisgarh.**

Key Points

- **Assam loses the quarter finals** of the Football Championships **to Mizoram.** A total of **32 states participated** in the championship.
- **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** announced the Swami Vivekananda U20 National Football Championship in April 2024.
 - Apart from the newly introduced U20 championship, the AIFF also holds two other men's age group competitions, the Junior NFC and the Sub-Junior NFC.

All India Football Federation (AIFF)

- The AIFF is the **organization that manages the game of association football in India.**
- It administers the running of the India national football team and also controls the I-League, India's premier domestic club competition, in addition to various other competitions and teams.
- The **AIFF was founded in 1937, and gained FIFA affiliation in the year 1948,** after India's independence in 1947.
- Currently, it has an office in Dwarka, New Delhi. India was one of the founding members of the Asian Football Confederation in 1954.

Naxalite killed in Encounter | Chhattisgarh | 20 May 2024

Why in News?

Recently, a [Naxalite](#) was killed in an exchange of fire with security personnel in **Chhattisgarh's Sukma district.**

Key Points

- The gunfight took place in the morning on a forested hill between Tolnai and Tetrai villages when a team of security personnel was out on an **anti-Naxal operation.**
- With this incident, 105 Naxalites have been killed so far in 2024 in separate encounters with security forces in Chhattisgarh.

Naxalism in India

- The term Naxalism derives its name from the village **Naxalbari of West Bengal.**
- It originated as rebellion against local landlords who bashed a peasant over a land dispute. The rebellion was initiated in 1967, with an objective of rightful redistribution of the land to working

peasants under the leadership of **Kanu Sanyal** and **Jagan Santhal**.

- Started in West Bengal, the movement has spread across Eastern India; in less developed areas of states such as Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.
- It is considered that Naxals support **Maoist political sentiments** and ideology.
 - **Maoism** is a form of communism developed by Mao Tse Tung. It is a doctrine to capture State power through a combination of armed insurgency, mass mobilization and strategic alliances.

Report on Haryana Government Schools | Haryana | 20 May 2024

Why in News?

A recent government report revealed that **19 schools in the state are without any students**, 811 schools have just one teacher, and a total of 3,148 schools have less than half of their student capacity filled.

Key Points

- The report, which outlined key points from a **meeting held by the Union education ministry's project** approval board in February 2024, pinpointed 14,562 government schools in the state.
- The report highlighted the **insufficient number of teachers**, particularly in elementary schools, and advised the government to promptly fill these vacancies.
 - The shortage of teachers has **impacted the central funding** allocated for salary payments.
 - In the primary sector, the financial assistance has decreased to Rs 14 lakh from Rs 19 lakh in the 2021-22 period.
 - Similarly, in higher education, grants have dropped from Rs 20 lakh to Rs 14 lakh due to several unfilled positions.
- Apart from the shortage of teachers, the report also pointed to **lack of basic infrastructure for students in these schools**.
 - While the schools are 18% short of their target for additional classrooms, toilets for boys and girls are 1% and 1.8% fewer than what they should be. Smart classrooms are also 1.4% behind the required number.
- The report emphasized that non-recurring approvals from the past, which have not been addressed by the state for years, will eventually become the state's sole responsibility after a period of 5 years according to the **Samagra Shiksha framework**.
- Schools that have not set up facilities must withdraw their initial proposals and think about submitting new ones.
 - The state government has been directed to **regularly update the progress of pending tasks on the Prabandh portal** to avoid any errors in the data presented.

Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- It is an **integrated scheme for school education** covering the entire gamut from **pre-school to class XII**.
- It aims to deliver inclusive, equitable, and affordable school education.
- It **subsumes** the three Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** and **Teacher Education (TE)**.
- The scheme covers **1.16 million schools**, over 156 million students and 5.7 million Teachers of Govt. and Aided schools (from pre-primary to senior secondary level).

- It is being implemented as a **centrally sponsored scheme**. It involves a 60:40 split in funding between the Centre and most States. It was **launched by the Ministry of Education in 2018**.

Samagra Shiksha Scheme 2.0

- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):**
 - In order to enhance the direct outreach of the scheme, all **child-centric interventions will be provided directly to the students** through DBT mode on an IT-based platform over a period of time.
 - This DBT would **include RTE (Right to Education) entitlements** such as textbooks, uniforms and transport allowance.
- **On NEP Recommendations:**
 - **Encouraging Indian languages:**
 - It has a new component for appointment of language teachers, which includes salaries, and training costs as well as bilingual books and teaching learning material as recommended in NEP.
 - **Pre-primary Education:**
 - It will now include **funding to support pre-primary sections at government schools**, i.e. for teaching and learning materials, indigenous toys and games and play-based activities.
 - Master trainers for pre-primary teachers and anganwadi workers will be supported under the scheme.
 - **NIPUN Bharat Initiative:**
 - Under this initiative, an **annual provision of Rs. 500 per child** for learning materials, Rs. 150 per teacher for manuals and resources and Rs. 10-20 lakh per district will be given for assessment for foundational literacy and numeracy.
 - **On Digital Initiatives:**
 - There is a provision for **ICT labs and smart classrooms**, including support for digital boards, virtual classrooms and DTH channels which have become more important in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - **For out-of-school children:**
 - It includes a provision to support out of school children from age 16 to 19 with funding of Rs. 2000 per grade to complete their education via open schooling.
 - There will also be a **greater focus on skills and vocational education**, both for students in school and dropouts.

Datia- Third Hottest Place in India | Madhya Pradesh | 20 May 2024

Why in News?

According to the [India Meteorological Department](#), the temperature in **Datia district of Madhya Pradesh reached 47.5 degrees Celsius**, making it the third hottest place.

Key Points

- **Najafgarh** in Delhi recorded the **highest temperature in the country at 47.8 degrees Celsius**, with **Agra closely behind at 47.7 degrees**.
- According to the sources, Rain or **thunderstorms** may occur in certain areas of the eastern Madhya Pradesh districts.
- **Heatwave conditions** could be experienced in isolated regions in western and eastern Madhya Pradesh.


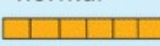


Heat Waves

▪ About:

- Heatwaves are **prolonged periods of excessively hot weather that can cause adverse impacts on human health, the environment, and the economy.**
- India, being a tropical country, is particularly vulnerable to heatwaves, which have become more frequent and intense in recent years.

▪ IMD Criteria for Declaring Heat Wave in India:

- Heat waves **need not be considered till the maximum temperature** of a station **reaches at least 40°C for Plains and at least 30°C for Hilly regions.**
- If the **normal maximum temperature of a station** is less than or equal to **40°C**, then **an increase of 5°C to 6°C from the normal temperature** is considered to be heat wave condition.
 - Further, **an increase of 7°C or more from the normal temperature** is considered a severe heat wave condition.
- If the **normal maximum temperature** of a station is more than 40°C, then an increase of 4°C to 5°C from the normal temperature is considered to be heat wave condition. Further, **an increase of 6°C or more** is considered a severe heat wave condition.
 - Additionally, if the **actual maximum temperature remains 45°C or more** irrespective of normal maximum temperature, a heat wave is declared.

Heat wave Scenario	40°C		30°C	
Maximum Temperature	Plains		Hills	
Heat wave conditions prevail when...	Severe heat wave conditions prevail when....			
Normal maximum temperature	Deviation from normal	Normal maximum temperature	Deviation from normal	
▲ Above		▲ Above		
40°C	4-5°C or more	40°C	6°C or more	
▼ At or below		▼ At or below		
40°C	5-6°C or more	40°C	7°C or more	