

2019



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

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BusinessLine



1. Rhinos to be Re-introduced in Uttarakhand

Why in News?

The Uttarakhand State Wildlife Board has cleared a proposal by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to introduce rhinoceroses in the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) to boost tourism and revive the habits of species that survive on low-height grass.

Rhino

- There are **three species** of rhino in Asia — **Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran**.
- **Javan and Sumatran Rhino** are **critically endangered** and the **Greater one-horned** is **vulnerable** in the IUCN Red List.
- They are spread across India, Nepal, Bhutan, Indonesia and Malaysia. These countries are also known as Asian Rhino Range Countries.
- Only the Greater one-horned rhino is found in India.

Indian Rhino Vision 2020

- India Rhino Vision is a partnership among the Government of Assam, The International Rhino Foundation, The World Wide Fund for Nature, The Bodoland Territorial Council and the US Fish and World Wildlife.
- It was launched in 2005 with the aim to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in Assam by the year 2020.

Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

- WII is an **autonomous institution** established in 1982; under the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate change.
- It offers training programs, academic courses, and advisory in wildlife research and management.
- The WII is based in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

2. United Nations Climate Change Conference

Why in News?

Recently the 25th edition of the **Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** took place in Madrid, Spain, under the presidency of the Chilean government.

- The conference incorporates:
 - 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework

- Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- 15th meeting of the parties to the **Kyoto Protocol (CMP15)**
- 2nd meeting of the parties to the **Paris Agreement (CMA2)**

COP25

- Originally, the Summit was scheduled to be held in Chile, but due to violent mass movement across the country, the venue was changed.
- The location of this conference is rotated every year in different regions of the world. This year it was the turn of South America to host the event.
- International climate talks at COP25 closed with no deal on carbon markets. The negotiators postponed until next year a key decision on global carbon markets.
- **Objective:**
 - The prime objective of the conference is to complete the rule-book to the 2015 Paris Agreement that will become effective in 2020 to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (comes to an end in 2020).
 - The issues like the creation of new carbon markets, emission reduction targets, the country's individual targets, etc. remained unresolved during COP24 at Katowice (Poland) 2018.

UNFCCC

- The UNFCCC was signed in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also known as the **Earth Summit**, the **Rio Summit** or the **Rio Conference**.
- The UNFCCC entered into force on March 21, 1994, and has been ratified by 197 parties (196 countries and European Union).
- Objective:
 - The Convention's main objective is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.
 - Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

Kyoto Protocol

- The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the UNFCCC, which commits its parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets.
- The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 and entered into force in 2005.
- It recognised that developed countries are principally responsible for the

current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity.

- The detailed rules for the implementation of the Protocol were adopted at **COP-7 in Marrakesh**, in 2001 and are referred to as the Marrakesh Accords.
- Kyoto Protocol Phase-1 (2005-12) gave the target of cutting down emissions by 5%.
- Phase-2 (2013-20) gave the target of reducing emissions by at least 18% by the industrialised countries.

Paris Agreement 2015

- The Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°Celsius.
- Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) were conceived at Paris summit which require each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that it intends to achieve.
- Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions.
- Paris Agreement replaced earlier agreement to deal with climate change, Kyoto Protocol.
- USA recently pulled out from the agreement seriously damaging the global effort to reverse climate change, as the USA is one of the largest Greenhouse Gas emitters.

3. Houbara Bustard

Why in News?

- The government of Pakistan has issued special permits to the Emir of Qatar to hunt 100 houbara bustards, an internationally protected bird species found in Balochistan, Punjab Province of Pakistan.
- After the breeding spring season in Central Asia, Asian Species of Houbara migrate to spend winter in warmer regions in Pakistan.

Houbara Bustard

Habitat: Terrestrial, Semi arid regions of North Africa and Asia.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable

Reasons for Declining Population:

- Poaching
- Unregulated hunting
- Degradation of its natural habitat

4. Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

Why in News?

The Telangana government requested the Centre to treat Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) as a National Project and make adequate provision for it in the Union Budget for 2020-21.

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

- It is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the **Godavari River** in Kaleshwaram, Bhupalpally, Telangana, India.
- The project starts at the confluence point of Pranhita River and Godavari river Bhoopappally.
- It is executed by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL).

Objectives

- To make Telangana drought-proof and to provide water for industries.
- To provide drinking water to Hyderabad and Secunderabad by creating a series of storage tanks and a network of pipelines.

The Godavari Basin

- Godavari is the second largest river after the Ganga and the longest of Peninsular India.
- It is also known as the 'Dakshin Ganga'.
- It rises from the Trimbakeshwar hills slopes of the Western Ghats in Nashik district of Maharashtra.
- It flows east draining the states of Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha ultimately emptying into the Bay of Bengal through its extensive network of tributaries.
- Major left bank tributaries of Godavari are Purna, Pranhita, Indravati and Sabari rivers whereas its right bank tributaries Manjra and Manair rivers.

5. European Green Deal

Why in News?

The European Union (EU) announced European Green Deal as a measure to combat climate change. **Two major decisions** are at the heart of the European Green Deal:

- Climate neutrality
- 2030 Emission reduction target

About EU Green Deal

- **Climate Neutrality:**
 - The EU has promised to bring a law, binding on all member countries, to ensure it becomes “**climate neutral**” by **2050**.
 - The EU is now the **first** major emitter to **agree to the 2050 climate neutrality target**.
 - Climate neutrality, sometimes also expressed as a state of net-zero emissions, is achieved when a country’s emissions are balanced by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
 - Absorption can be increased by creating more carbon sinks like forests, while removal involves technologies like carbon capture and storage.
- **2030 Emission Reduction Target:**
 - In its climate action plan declared under the Paris Agreement, the EU was committed to making a 40% reduction in its emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.
 - It is now promising to increase this reduction to at least 50% and work towards 55%.
- The Green Deal includes **sectoral plans to achieve these two overall targets**, and proposals for the policy changes that would be required.
 - Proposals for making the steel industry carbon-free by 2030.
 - New strategies for transport and energy sectors.
 - Revision of management of railway and shipping to make them more efficient.
 - More stringent air pollution emission standards for vehicles.

Way Forward

- European Union, including all its 28 member countries, is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world after China and the United States.
- The Green Deal is important but inadequate in itself to achieve the emission reductions that would be required to save the world from catastrophic and irreversible impacts of climate change.
- It needs complementary efforts from other countries to make a significant impact.
- The rich and developed countries should provide finance and technology to developing countries to help them fight climate change.

6. Balimela Reservoir

Why in News?

There has been a demand that the State government immediately start providing ‘patta’ or **documented land rights** to the tribal inhabitants of ‘**Swabhiman Anchal**’, the erstwhile cut-off area of the **Balimela reservoir**.

Balimela Reservoir

- The Balimela Reservoir is located in Malkangiri district, **Odisha**, on the **river Sileru**.
 - The Sileru, also known as the **Machkund River**, rises in the Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh.
 - It flows northward into Jalaput Reservoir on the border with Odisha state.
 - The Sileru empties into the Sabari River in Chhattisgarh. Sabari river is a tributary of Godavari.
- Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Odisha states entered into agreements to construct **Balimela dam as a joint project** and share the Sileru river waters available equally at Balimela dam site.
- The capacity of the Reservoir is 94,500 mcft. From this reservoir, 50% of water is diverted through a tunnel to Balimela Power House and the other 50% is let off in the river for utilization by Andhra Pradesh.

7. Health and Pollution Report

Why in News?

Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) released the 2019 Pollution and Health Metrics: Global, Regional and Country Analysis report.

- The report updates findings from the Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health and provides a ranking of pollution deaths on global, regional and country levels.
- The report uses the most recent **Global Burden of Disease data** from the Institute of Health Metrics Evaluation.

Key Findings

- The report includes **three lists on pollution induced deaths**, namely,
 - Annual Premature Pollution-Related Deaths
 - Pollution Deaths Per 1,00,000 People
 - Annual Premature Air-Pollution Related Deaths
- India is the only country that features in the top 10 in all three lists.

- India is followed by China in the number of pollution deaths, with about 1.8 million.
- The United States makes the top 10 list with 1,97,000 pollution-related deaths, while ranking 132nd in the number of deaths per 100,000 people.
- Air pollution- both ambient and indoor- is one of the largest and most obvious types of pollution affecting global health.

About GAHP

- The Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) is a collaborative body made up of more than 60 members and dozens of observers.
- It was formed in 2012 to **advocate for resources and solutions to pollution** problems.
- GAHP envisions a world where the health of present and future generations, especially children and pregnant women, is safe from toxic pollution.
- It seeks to **build demand for pollution prevention and mitigation programs** that are implemented by its members.
- It also directly **assists low- and middle-income countries** to prioritise and address pollution through planning processes.

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