News Analysis (17 Feb, 2020)

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Increasing Neonatal Deaths in MP

Why in News

According to the **National Health Mission (NHM)** data, **Madhya Pradesh** has recorded the **highest percentage of newborn deaths at 11.5%** against the total admissions to government-run Sick Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) in the **past three years across the country.**

- The **country's average percentage** of newborn deaths is at 7 %.
- The **neonatal deaths in India mainly occur due to** premature births and low birth weight (35.9%), pneumonia (16.9%), birth asphyxia and birth trauma (9.9%), other non-communicable diseases (7.9%), diarrhoea (6.7%), congenital anomalies(4.6%) and infections (4.2%).

NOTE:

According to UNICEF, in India (2018),

- Under 5 Mortality Rate is 39 deaths per 1000 live births.
- Infant Mortality Rate (under one year of age) is 32 deaths per 1000 live births.
- Neonatal Mortality Rate (during the first 28 days of life) is 24 deaths per 1000 live births.

Key Points

- **Madhya Pradesh Compared to the National Scenario:**
  - The **admissions of neonates in the hospital** of Madhya Pradesh have **dropped** (lower than West Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) from April 2017 to December 2019 but the **percentage of deaths** still **remained at 12.2%.**
  - Within the same time period, **West Bengal** reported **maximum neonatal deaths** (34,344) in the country but reported the **declining percentage of deaths** (from 9.2% in 2017 to 8.9% in 2019) which **coincided with a decrease in admissions** at hospitals.
- **Scenario in Tribal and Rural areas of MP:**
  - **Most tribal (31 out of 51) districts** in Madhya Pradesh report low nutrition and weak maternal health levels and thus **death percentage of more than 10.**
  - The **absence of community referrals,** significantly aided by **Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)** workers is lacking in rural and tribal areas as **only one in ten sick neonates born outside a hospital is taken to an SNCU.**
  - It is majorly due to the absence of transport, inability to identify a disease by parents, and lack of awareness.
- **Scenario in Urban Areas:**
  Urban areas of Madhya Pradesh report a higher death percentage as they offer tertiary care, and admit several serious cases from peripheral districts.
- **Reasons:**
  - Staff crunch, low community referrals, absence of a special neonatal transport service to health centres, reliance on units in cities as last resort and the non-availability of enough units to cater to increasing institutional deliveries have contributed to the increase in the percentage of deaths.
  - **Only one against the required five** (82% shortfall) of surgeons, gynaecologists, physicians and paediatricians are available at hospitals.
  - **With increasing institutional deliveries** in the State (80.8% as per the **National Family Health Survey-4**, 2015-2016), **the number of neonatal care units has not increased proportionally.**
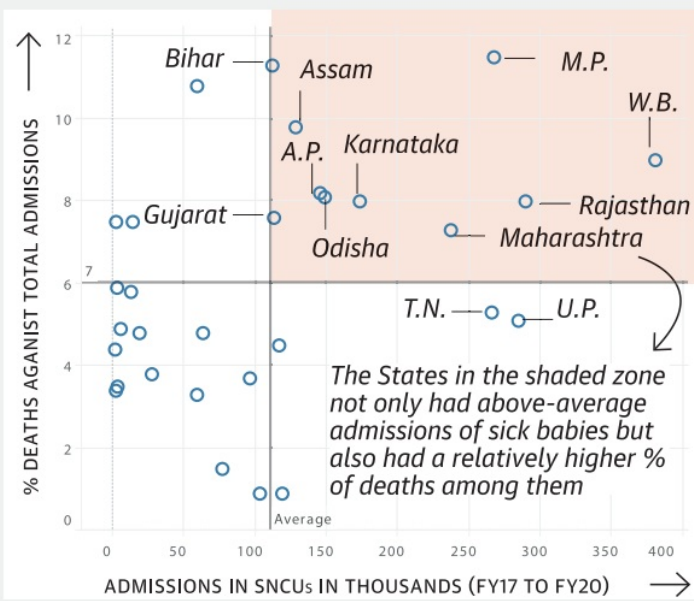- **Sex Ratio in Admissions at Hospitals:**
  Madhya Pradesh has recorded an **abysmal sex ratio in admission** (number of girls admitted against 1,000 boys) at 663 in the three years against the country average of 733.
    - More admissions of boys (almost three-fourths of the cases) show a bias against the girl child in society,
    - The other reason for the lower admissions of a girl child can be attributed to better immunity among girl children to combat diseases.
- **Cases of Underreporting:**
  The NHM data also reveals the cases of underreporting in 43 districts where **government officials didn't report more than 50% of deaths of children** under five to keep clean records.

Lives cut short

In the last three years, more than 7% of the babies admitted to sick newborn care units (SNCUs), across 13 States, died. Graph plots admissions of sick newborns in the last three years against % of deaths

The States in the shaded zone not only had above-average admissions of sick babies but also had a relatively higher % of deaths among them

% DEATHS AGAINST TOTAL ADMISSIONS

ADMISSIONS IN SNCUs IN THOUSANDS (FY17 TO FY20)

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)

- ASHA is a trained female community health activist. Selected from the community itself and accountable to it, the ASHA works as an interface between the community and the public health system.
- The role of an ASHA is that of a community-level care provider. This includes a mix of tasks: facilitating access to health care services, building awareness about health care entitlements especially amongst the poor and marginalized, promoting healthy behaviours and mobilizing for collective action for better health outcomes and meeting curative care needs as appropriate to the organization of service delivery in that area and compatible with her training and skills.

Source: TH

Treating a Child Witness

Why in News

A **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** has been filed in the Karnataka High Court, asking for guidelines to be issued to police regarding interrogation of minors in criminal proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act and United Nations (UN) resolutions.

Relevant UN Resolutions

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, **1989:** It states that 'in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'.

  India has been a signatory to this Convention since 1992.
- **Guidelines with respect to Child Witnesses (2009)**
  - Authorities should treat children in a **caring and sensitive manner,** with interview techniques that "minimise distress or trauma to children".
  - An investigator specially trained in dealing with children be appointed to guide the interview of the child, using a **child-sensitive approach.**
  - The investigator shall, to the extent possible, avoid repetition of the interview during the justice process in order to **prevent secondary victimisation of the child.**

    Secondary victimisation is defined as victimisation that occurs not as a direct result of a criminal act, but through the response of institutions and individuals to the victim.

Age of Witnesses in India

- **Definition:** Any person who appears before a court or tribunal so as to give evidence or testimony, for or against any person involved is called a witness.
- **Age:** Under **Section 118 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872,** there is no minimum age for a witness. Children as young as three years old have been witnesees before trial courts in cases of sexual abuse.
  - Any person may be a witness who can understand the questions put to him and rationally answer them.
  - The nature of the section is disqulificatory in nature, meaning, that it disqualifies any person from testifying in the event that person is unable to comprehend or rationally respond to the questions put to them.
- Usually during a trial, the court, before recording the testimony of a child witness, determines his or her competency on the basis of their ability to give rational answers.

Relevant Indian Laws Related to Children

- **Article 39 (f) of the Constitution:** The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

- **Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act:** The primary legislation in the country pertaining to children is **the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.** The Act **does not provide guidelines specifically** relating to questioning or interviewing children as witnesses. However, it advocates for the following:
  - **Child-friendly approach** in the adjudication and disposal of matters. This implies, for the police to not be in their uniform while dealing with children.
  - **Special Juvenile Police Unit:** Interviews of children are done by specialised units of police who are trained to sensitively deal with them.
  - Provides for a **Child Welfare Committee** in every district to take cognisance of any violations by the authorities in their handling of children.
- **POCSO Act: The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012** has specific guidelines regarding interviewing children as witnesses, though the guidelines pertain to child sexual abuse victims.
  - Interviews should be conducted in a safe, neutral, child-friendly environment, including allowing for them to be done at homes.
  - It says a child should not be made to recount the incident in question multiple times.
  - The Act also allows for a support person, who could be trained in counselling, to be present with the child to reduce stress and trauma.

Way Forward

- The Delhi High Court has come up with guidelines for recording evidence of vulnerable witnesses in criminal matters. A vulnerable witness is defined as anyone who has not completed 18 years of age.
- The guidelines underline the importance of the criminal justice system needing to respond proactively, sensitively, and in an age-appropriate manner when dealing with children.

Source: IE

Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)

Why in News

The annual All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) was held in New Delhi on 16th February, 2020.

- The Conference was presided over by the Union Minister for Law and Justice.

- Apart from central services issues, the CAT will soon have jurisdiction to handle disputes and other issues related to the non-central services in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Central Administrative Tribunal

- **Article 323 - A:** The Central Administrative Tribunal had been established under **Article 323 - A of the Constitution** for adjudication of disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the **Union** or other authorities under the control of the Government.
    - In pursuance of Article 323-A, the Parliament has passed the Administrative Tribunals Act in 1985. The act authorises the Central government to establish one Central Administrative Tribunal and the state administrative tribunals. This act opened a new chapter in the sphere of providing speedy and inexpensive justice to the aggrieved public servants.
- **Benches:** There are **17 Benches and 21 Circuit Benches** in the Central Administrative Tribunal all over India.
- **Objective and Composition:** The CAT is a specialist body consisting of Administrative Members and Judicial Members who by virtue of their specialized knowledge are better equipped to dispense speedy and effective justice. It was **established in 1985.**
    - A Chairman who has been a sitting or retired Judge of a High Court heads the Central Administrative Tribunal.
- **Operating Principles:**
    - It exercises jurisdiction only in relation to the service matters of the parties covered by the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985.
    - The Tribunal is **guided by the principles of natural justice** in deciding cases and is not bound by the procedure, prescribed by the Civil Procedure Code.
    - Under Section 17 of the Administrative Tribunal Act, 1985, the Tribunal has been conferred with the power to exercise the **same jurisdiction and authority in respect of contempt of itself as a High Court.**
- **Independence:** The conditions of service of the Chairman and Members are the same as applicable to a Judge of High Court as per the Administrative Tribunals (Amendment) Act, 2006.
- **Appeals against Orders:** The orders of Central Administrative Tribunal are challenged by way of Writ Petition under Article 226/227 of the Constitution before respective High Court in whose territorial jurisdiction the Bench of the Tribunal is situated.

Source: PIB

CMS COP-13

Why in News

India is hosting the **13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** from 17th to 22nd February, 2020 at **Gandhinagar in Gujarat.**

- The **theme** of CMS COP-13 is **'Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home'.**
- The **mascot** for CMS COP-13 is **'Gibi – The Great Indian Bustard'**. It is a critically endangered species (according to the IUCN) and has been accorded the highest protection status (listed in Schedule I) under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

- In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), has been in force **since 1983, under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme.**
- **Also referred to as the Bonn Convention,** it provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on **Appendix I** and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them.
- Migratory species that need conservation and management or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in **Appendix II of the Convention.**
- India has signed a non legally binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CMS on the conservation and management of Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016).
    - India is a temporary home to several migratory animals and birds. The important among these include Amur Falcons, Bar headed Geese, Black necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpback Whales, etc.

Source: PIB

ISRO Plans for 2020-21

Why in News

The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has released its **annual report for 2019-20** recently.

- ISRO has been allocated with the **budget of ₹13,480 crores** for 2020-21.
- Currently, India has **19 national Earth Observation (EO) satellites, 18 communication satellites and 8 navigation satellites in service.**
    - These are used for broadcasting, telephony, Internet services, weather, agriculture-related forecasting, security, disaster-time rescue and relief and location-based services.
    - Three of the communication satellites are dedicated to military communication and networking.

Key Points

- The report states an annual plan of **36 missions** (including both satellites and their launchers) including **the launch of 10 Earth Observation (EO) satellites.**
- The upcoming EO satellites include radar imaging satellites **RISAT-2BR2, RISAT- 1A and 2A; Oceansat-3, GISAT-1 and Resourcesat-3/3S.**
- ISRO plans to launch **Chandrayan-3, Gaganyan** in the year of 2020-21.
- ISRO also plans to launch a **new series of high-resolution HRSATs** through **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** launcher.
- ISRO is expected to develop **its own space station within a decade.**

RISAT-2BR2

- The RISAT-2BR2 will form a triad with **RISAT-2B** and RISAT-2B1 covering around 120 degrees apart.
- It will increase the frequency of observation in the required areas to provide all-weather, day/night imaging services from space.
- The RISAT satellites carry a synthetic aperture radar on them, providing all-weather, 24-hour information to security agencies.

GISAT-1

- GISAT-1 **(Geo Imaging Satellite)** will be placed in a **geostationary orbit** of around **36,000 km.**
    - All Indian EOs satellites have been placed so far in a 600-odd-km orbits and circle the earth pole to pole.
- It will apparently be in a **fixed spot** looking over the **Indian continent at all times.**
- It will have **high-resolution cameras** which will help to monitor any changes in borders and the overall geographical condition of the country, etc.

5th India Russia Military Industry Conference

Why in News

Recently, several Memorandum of Understanding(MoUs) were signed between **Indian and Russian** companies **for setting up joint ventures to develop a range of defence equipment.**

- The MoUs were signed during the **5th India Russia military industry conference** held during the <u>**Defexpo 2020 in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).**</u>
- The MoUs intends **to fix a constant issue of lack of timely spares and support** faced by the Indian military.

Key Points

- The MoUs come under the **Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on joint manufacturing of spares in India** signed in **2018** for mutual cooperation related to Russian origin arms and defence equipment.
- The MoUs were related to the production of different defence equipment such as parts of the tanks such as the T-72, T-90, radar systems, Anti Submarine Weapon (ASW) Rocket launchers and 3D modelling.
- The MoUs majorly focuses on:
  - The **development, production and manufacture of small spacecraft** for remote sensing.
  - Establishment of a joint venture in India for the production of various subsystems of air defence missile systems like Tunguska, Kavadrat, etc as well as the Shilka self-propelled air defence gun system.
  - Refurbishment and life extension of the missiles.

Korku Tribe

- The Korku mostly resides in the **Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and adjoining Melghat region of Maharashtra.**
- The Korku are primarily cultivators. They are also excellent agriculturalists and have pioneered the cultivation of potato and coffee.
- They live in small groups of huts made of grass and wood.

- Korku is **one of the 196 languages** termed **endangered by UNESCO.**
  - A few groups have been more successful in preserving their language, especially the **Potharia Korku (from the Vindhya mountains).**
- The community has a **distinct cultural heritage.** The traditional healing methods are still widely practiced among them.
- The Korku regard their dead as Gods. To commemorate the dead, they install a memorial pillar, which is called Munda.

Madhav National Park

- **Location:** Madhav National Park is situated in Shivpuri District, Madhya Pradesh.
- It is a part of the upper **Vindhyan hills.**
- **History:** The Park was the hunting ground of Mughal emperors and Maharaja of Gwalior. It got the status of a National Park in 1959.
- **Ecosystem:** It has a **diverse ecosystem** consisting of lakes, dry deciduous & dry thorn forests.
  - The forest is home to tigers, leopards, Nilgai, and **Chinkara** (Gazella bennettii) and **Chousingha** (Tetracerus quadricornis) and Deers (**Chital**, Sambar and Barking Deer) among others.
- **Tiger Corridor:** The Park falls within one of the **32 major Tiger Corridors** of the country, which are operationalised through the **Tiger Conservation Plan.** Tiger Conservation Plan is implemented under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
  - **Madhav National Park** is a part of the Ranthambhore-Kuno-Madhav (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) Tiger Corridor of **Central India & Eastern Ghats landscape.**
  - **India's tiger landscapes are:** Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains, Central Indian Landscape and Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats, and North-East.
- **Conservation Issues:** The Park is currently facing **displacement and rehabilitation** issues as it is home to **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)s** like **Saharia.**
  - PVTGs have some basic characteristics - they are mostly **homogenous,** with a **small population, relatively physically isolated, absence of written language, relatively simple technology** and a **slower rate of change** etc.
- **Other National Parks in Madhya Pradesh:** Bandhavgarh, Kanha NP, Pench (Priyadarshini) NP, Panna NP, Mandla Plant Fossils NP, Sanjay NP, Satpura NP, Van Vihar NP

Source: TH

Wildfires in the Mukurthi National Park

Why in News

Ahead of summer and peak fire season, **'fire lines'** or 'fire breaks', in the Mukurthi National Park (MNP) are being **constructed** by the Tamil Nadu government.

Key Points

- **Fire line** is an artificially formed **break in foliage or forest cover** to control the spread of wildfires by limiting the amount of combustible vegetation available.
- **Other Measures Being Taken to Control Wildfires in the Park :**
  - **Cool Burning :** Cool burning is done in a controlled manner by artificially creating small, localised fires to limit the amount of vegetation available in any given area. It means that any fires will not have any build-up of "vegetative fuel" to use to become a large, uncontrollable fire.
  - **Removal of invasive trees** such as **wattle** is also being done in the Park in order to reduce the fuel for wildfires.

Wildfires

- Wildfire is a general term which includes any uncontrolled, unplanned forest fires, grassland fires, bushfires, brush fires and any other vegetation fire in countryside areas.
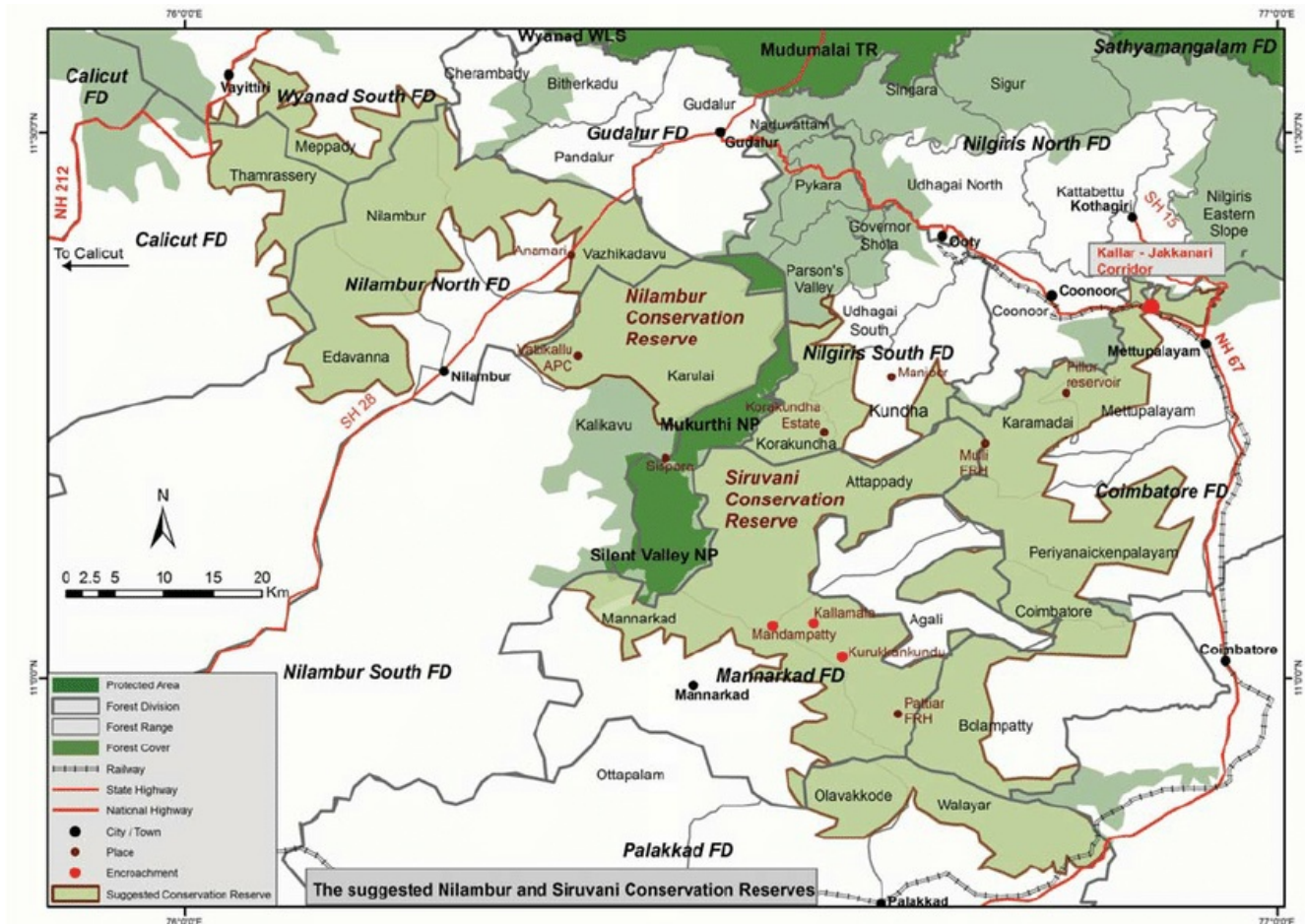- Wildfires occur in every continent except Antarctica.

Mukurthi National Park

- **Extent:** Mukurthi National Park (MNP) is located in the northwest corner of Tamil Nadu in the **Western Ghats.**
- It is a part of **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** (UNESCO World Heritage Site) along with **Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary**, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and Silent Valley.
- **Keystone Species :** The park was created to protect its **keystone species**, the **Nilgiri Tahr**.
  - There has been almost a 27% **increase in the population of the Tahr in the Nilgiris over the last few years.**
- **Forest Type:** The park is characterised by **montane grasslands and shrublands** interspersed with sholas in a high altitude area of high rainfall, near-freezing temperatures and high winds.
- **Peaks:** The Park is also home to **Mukurthi Peak,** one of the highest peaks in the Nilgiri Hills.
- **Tribes Living Inside: Todas**
  - Todas are a pastoral tribe of the Nīlgiri Hills.

New Species of Urban Lizard

- A new species of lizard, the urban bent-toed gecko **(Cyrtodactylus urbanus)** was discovered in Guwahati, Assam.
- The bent-toed gecko was earlier thought to be the same as the **Khasi Hills lizard.**
  - All bent-toed geckos in Northeast India were thought to be a single species, the **Cyrtodactylus khasiensis** found primarily in the **Khasi Hills of Meghalaya.**
- Although the urban bent-toed gecko falls within the khasiensis group, it differs from other members of this group in **mitochondrial sequence data** and aspects of **morphology** (Branch of biology that deals with form and structure of plants and

  animals).

- **Markedly Different:** The new species of lizard is also markedly different in molecular structure, blotch and colour from the **Cyrtodactylus guwahatiensis,** or the Guwahati bent-toed gecko, that was discovered two years ago.

- **Urbanization** is a major **threat** to the survival of geckos.
- Guwahati is home to numerous important species. The city provides an edge for urban biodiversity to thrive because it encompasses 18 hills, 8 reserve forests, 2 wildlife sanctuaries and a **Ramsar Site (Deepor Beel)** besides the Brahmaputra river.

Gecko

- **Geckos are** (suborder Gekkota), any of more than 1,000 species of lizards making up 6 families of the suborder Gekkota.
- Geckos are mostly small, usually nocturnal reptiles with soft skin.

Source: TH