



## World Dugong Day 2020

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### Why in News

**World Dugong Day** is celebrated on **28<sup>th</sup> May, every year.**



### Key Points

- **Dugong** (*Dugong dugon*) also called '**Sea Cow**' is one of the four surviving species in the Order Sirenia and it is the **only existing species of herbivorous mammal that lives exclusively in the sea** including in India.
- They are listed as **Vulnerable** on the **IUCN Red List** and are protected in **India** under **Schedule I** of the **Wild (Life) Protection Act, 1972**.
- According to a 2013 survey report of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), there were only about 200 dugongs in the **Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu**, the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** and the **Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat**.
- Dugongs are an **important part of the marine ecosystem** and their depletion will have effects all the way up the food chain. **Proper conservation** is the only way to save dugongs from extinction.

- **Threats:**

- Dugongs **graze on seagrass** and the **loss of seagrass beds** due to **ocean floor trawling** is one of the most important factors behind decreasing dugong populations in many parts of the world.

**Trawling** is a **method of fishing** that involves **pulling a fishing net through the water** behind one or more boats. It is **harmful to the environment** because it damages the seafloor, coral reefs and other marine animals.

- **Human activities** such as the destruction and modification of habitat, pollution, rampant illegal fishing activities, vessel strikes, unsustainable hunting or poaching and unplanned tourism are the main threats to dugongs.

Dugong meat is consumed under the wrong impression that it cools down human body temperature.

- **Steps Taken for Conservation:**

- In February 2020, India hosted the **13<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (CoP)** of the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**, an environmental treaty under the aegis of the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.

- The Government of India is a **signatory to the CMS since 1983**.
- India has signed **non-legally binding Memorandums of Understanding (MoU)** with CMS on the conservation and management of **Siberian Cranes** (1998), **Marine Turtles** (2007), **Dugongs** (2008) and **Raptors** (2016).

- The **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** constituted a **'Task Force for Conservation of Dugongs'** to look into issues related to conservation of dugongs and implementation of the 'UNEP/CMS Dugong MoU' in India.

It also facilitates **India to act as the leading nation in the South Asia Sub-region** with respect to dugong conservation.

**Source: DTE**