



Rhinoceros

//

RHINOCEROS

World Rhino Day - 22nd September (declared by WWF in 2010)

5 Main Species of Rhino			
Species	Found in	IUCN Red List Status	Habitat
African White	Africa	NT	Long/short grass Savannah
African Black	Africa	CE	Semi-Desert Savannah
Greater one-horned	Asia	Vu (CITES - Appendix I, WPA - Schedule I)	Tropical grassland
Javan	Asia	CE	Tropical, subtropical forests
Sumatran	Asia	CE	Same as Javan

Ujung Kulon National Park (a UNESCO WHS) is home to the last remaining wild Javan rhinos on Earth

Greater One-Horned Rhino

Only species found in India (aka Indian Rhino)



CHARACTERISTICS

- Largest of the 5 species
- Identified by a single black horn and a grey-brown hide with skin folds



Threats

- Poaching for horns
- Habitat loss
- Decreasing Genetic diversity



Protected Areas (India)

- **UP**
 - ◆ Dudhwa TR
- **West Bengal**
 - ◆ Jaldapara NP
 - ◆ Gorumara NP
- **Assam**
 - ◆ Pabitora WLS
 - ◆ Orang NP
 - ◆ Kaziranga NP (max no. of Rhinos: ~2400)
 - ◆ Manas NP



Conservation Efforts (India)

- National Rhino Conservation Strategy
- Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (launched in 2005)

New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019

Signed by 5 rhino range nations (India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia)



State of India's Environment Report 2023

For Prelims: CSE, DTE, Air Pollution, Plastic Waste, Municipal Solid Waste, Landfills.

For Mains: State of India's Environment report 2023.

Why in News?

Recently, **State of India's Environment report 2023** was launched by [Centre for Science and Environment \(CSE\)](#) and **DTE (Down to Earth)** magazine, covering an extensive gamut of subject assessments, ranging from climate change, agriculture and industry to water, plastics, forests and biodiversity.

- The report is the annual publication, focusing on [climate change](#), migration, health and food systems. It also covers biodiversity, forest and wildlife, energy, industry, habitat, pollution, waste, agriculture and rural development.
- CSE is a public interest research and advocacy organisation based in New Delhi.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Encroachment:**
 - Over 30,000 water bodies have been encroached on in the country and India is generating **150,000 tonnes of [Municipal Solid Waste \(MSW\)](#) every day** — more than half of which is either **dumped in [landfills](#) or remains unattended.**
- **Air Pollution:**
 - Four years and 11 months is the **average duration of life lost to [air pollution](#)** in India.
 - Rural India is losing **more years due to air pollution-related health issues** than the urban belt.
 - Rural India needs 35 % more community health centers.
- **Environmental Crimes:**
 - Environmental crimes continue unabated — courts need to decide **on 245 cases every day to clear the backlog.**
- **Extreme Weather Events:**
 - Between January and October 2022, India witnessed [extreme weather events](#) on 271 days.
 - These extreme weather events **claimed over 2,900 lives.**
- **SDGs:**
 - Over the past five years, India's overall global rank in meeting the United Nations-mandated [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) has slipped by nine places — ranking 121 in 2022.
 - India ranks below four south Asian countries — Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.
 - India is facing challenges in 11 of the 17 SDGs, including SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities).
- **Plastic Waste:**
 - While the magnitude of the problem related to Plastic Waste remains gargantuan, a **plethora of policies and urgency** are on the right path.
 - Cities are becoming waste-wise, learning to segregate at source, minimise plastics and reuse reprocess waste into wealth.
- **Agriculture:**
 - In agriculture, strong evidence is emerging of the efficacy of traditional and [regenerative farming](#) methods.
 - On the issue of forests and biodiversity, losses of forests are a dark truth, but at the same

time more and more communities are demanding rights over forests – what is more, these rights are being granted.

What are the Recommendations?

- We need to have a common minimum programme that brings all countries together on the only issues that matter for humanity: how to avert the existential crisis we face today and how to build a just and inclusive world order.
- In fact, the [pandemic treaty](#) is a welcome development in this direction.

[Source: DTE](#)

Cattle Dehorning & Castration

For Prelims: Cattle Dehorning & Castration, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, Animal Rearing, Animal Welfare Board of India.

For Mains: Cattle Dehorning & Castration.

Why in News?

Recently, the central government has laid down the procedures for **Dehorning Cattle and Castration**, branding or nose-roping of any animal.

What is Dehorning and Castration of Cattle?

- Dehorning is the process of removing or **reducing the horns of cattle**, while **castration** is the **process of removing the testicles of male cattle**. Both practices are commonly performed on cattle for a variety of reasons, such as to **improve safety for handlers and other animals, prevent injury, reduce aggression**, and improve meat quality.
- Dehorning can be done using several methods, including chemical or electrical methods, saws, and dehorning irons. In many cases, **dehorning is done when the animal is young to minimize pain** and discomfort.
 - The existing methods involve pushing a bull to the ground to use a castrator and painkiller.
- Castration is typically done to male cattle that will not be used for breeding purposes, as it can help to **reduce aggression and improve meat** quality.
 - The castration method involves crushing the blood vessels, nerves and vas deferens (a coiled tube that carries the sperm out of the testes) to cause the testicles to become defunct.

What are the New Rules?

- All procedures are to be carried out with the **involvement of a registered veterinary practitioner**, along with the mandatory use of general and local anaesthetics.
- The rules demand the **breeding of naturally hornless cattle over dehorning** and using face halters and other humane procedures for nose roping and preventing cold and hot branding on live tissues.
- The rules prescribe a **methodology for euthanasia for ill animals** to avoid a painful death.
- The issue is concerning as most dairy owners and farmers abandon their bulls on roads as it incurs extra cost or effort to sustain them.

What are the Related Existing Provisions?

- The Dehorning and Castration procedures were earlier undefined under **Sections 11 and subsection 3 of the [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960](#)**, which made it difficult to prevent cruelty against animals.
 - Section 11 defined the acts that **amount to treating animals with cruelty**.
 - But subsection 3 allowed exceptions for animal husbandry procedures, which involve dehorning cattle and castration, branding and nose roping of animals in a prescribed manner.
- Section 3(c) of the law also offered exceptions in **“the extermination or destruction of any animal under the authority of any law** for the time being in force.

What is Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960?

- The legislative intent of the Act is to **“prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals”**.
- The **[Animal Welfare Board of India \(AWBI\)](#)** was established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Act.
- This Act provides for punishment for causing unnecessary cruelty and suffering to animals. The Act **defines animals and different forms of animals**.
- Discusses different forms of cruelty, exceptions, and killing of a suffering animal in case any cruelty has been committed against it, so as to relieve it from further suffering.
- Provides guidelines relating to experimentation on animals for scientific purposes.
- The **Act enshrines the provisions relating to the exhibition** of the performing animals, and offences committed against the performing animals.
- This Act provides for the limitation period of 3 months beyond which no prosecution shall lie for any offences under this Act.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2014)

1. Animal Welfare Board of India is established under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body.
3. National Ganga River Basin Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- The Animal Welfare Board of India was established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) was established in 2009 under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, which declared Ganges as the “National River” of India. It is a financing, planning, implementing, monitoring and coordinating authority for the river Ganges. It functions under the erstwhile Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (now

- Ministry of Jal Shakti). It is chaired by the Prime Minister of India. **Hence, statement 3 is correct.**
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

[Source: DTE](#)

PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

For Prelims: PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme, One District One Product (ODOP), Aspirational Districts, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), NABARD.

For Mains: Features of the PMFME Scheme, Status of the Food Processing Industry in India.

Why in News?

The [Ministry of Food Processing Industries \(MoFPI\)](#) is implementing a **centrally sponsored PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME) Scheme** for providing **financial, technical, and business support to micro food processing enterprises in India.**

- This scheme is a part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan - [Vocal for Local Initiative in the food processing sector.](#)

What are the Features of the PMFME Scheme?

- **About:**
 - The PMFME scheme aims to **enhance the competitiveness of new and existing individual micro-enterprises** in the **unorganized segment** of the food processing industry and promote formalization of the sector.
 - The PMFME scheme is operational for a period of five years from **2020-21 to 2024-25** with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 Crore.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - The scheme adopts the [One District One Product \(ODOP\)](#) approach to reap the benefit of scale in terms of procurement of inputs, availing common services and marketing of products.
 - Other Focus areas include **Waste to wealth products, minor forest products and Aspirational Districts.**
- **Assistance Available under PMFME Scheme:**
 - **Support to Individual/Group Category Micro Enterprises:**
 - **Credit-linked capital subsidy of 35%** of the eligible project cost, with a maximum ceiling of Rs.10 lakh per unit.
 - **Support to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for Seed Capital:**
 - **Seed capital up to Rs. 40,000/- per member of SHG** engaged in food processing for working capital and purchase of small tools, subject to a maximum of Rs. 4 lakh per SHG.
 - **Support for Common Infrastructure:**
 - **Credit-linked capital subsidy of 35%**, with a maximum of Rs. 3 crore, to support FPOs, SHGs, Cooperatives, and any Government agency for **setting up of common infrastructure.**
 - **Capacity Building:**

- The scheme envisages training for **Entrepreneurship Development Skilling (EDP+)**, a program modified to meet the requirements of the food processing industry and product specific skilling.
- **District Resource Persons (DRPs)** have been appointed to provide handholding support to micro food processing enterprises for the compliance of FSSAI and other statutory requirements.

What is the Status of the Food Processing Industry in India?

▪ About:

- Food processing is a type of **manufacturing in which raw materials are processed into intermediate foods** or edible items using scientific knowledge and technology.
- It improves the **storability, portability, palatability, and convenience** of the finished product.

▪ Significance:

- During the last five years ending FY21, the food processing industries sector has been growing at an **average annual growth rate of around 8.3%**
- As per the latest **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) 2019-20**, **12.2%** of persons in the registered manufacturing sector were employed in the food processing sector.
- The value of agri-food exports, including processed food exports, was about **10.9 % of India's total exports** during 2021-22

▪ Issues:

- **Lack of Infrastructure:** The food processing industry in India faces challenges with infrastructure, including [inadequate cold storage facilities](#), transport facilities, and processing plants.
- **Limited Access to Finance:** Many small and medium-sized food processing businesses in India struggle to access finance to invest in their operations and improve their products.
 - This limits their ability to expand and compete with larger players in the industry.
- **Inadequate Quality Control:** There are concerns about the quality of food processing in India, particularly in relation to **food safety and hygiene standards**.
 - This is a major challenge for the industry, as it **affects consumer confidence and limits export opportunities**.

▪ Government Initiatives:

- **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** approval under automatic route has been permitted for the food processing sector
- A **Special Food Processing Fund** of Rs. 2000 crore was set up with [National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development \(NABARD\)](#) to provide affordable credit for investments in setting up [Mega Food Parks \(MFP\)](#) as well as processing units in the MFPs.
 - In 2019, the coverage of the fund was extended to the setting up of **Agro-Processing Clusters** along with setting up of individual manufacturing units.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With what purpose is the Government of India promoting the concept of “Mega Food Parks”? (2011)

1. To provide good infrastructure facilities for the food processing industry.
2. To increase the processing of perishable items and reduce wastage.
3. To provide emerging and eco-friendly food processing technologies to entrepreneurs.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. What are the reasons for the poor acceptance of a cost-effective small processing unit? How will the food processing unit be helpful to uplift the socioeconomic status of poor farmers? **(2017)**

Source: PIB

Marine Protected Areas

For Prelims: Marine Protected Areas, Antarctica, Climate Change, Krill, Marine Resources, Fisheries.

For Mains: Marine Protected Areas.

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India has announced that India will support setting up two **Marine Protected Areas (MPA)** in **Antarctica** to protect marine life and its ecosystem services.



What are the MPAs?

▪ About:

- MPA is a defined region managed for the **long-term conservation of [marine resources](#), ecosystem services or cultural heritage.**
- Within the region, certain activities are limited, or entirely prohibited, to meet specific conservation, habitat protection, ecosystem monitoring or [fisheries](#) management objectives.
- MPAs do not necessarily **exclude fishing, research or other human activities**; in fact, many MPAs are multi-purpose areas.

▪ Need for Setting MPAs in Antarctica:

- The Southern Ocean that encircles Antarctica covers **around 10 % of the global ocean** and is home to nearly 10,000 unique polar species.
- Climate change is altering habitats such as **sea ice and the sheltered seafloor under ice shelves** that are home to a variety of species.
- Commercial fishery harvest krill, to produce fish meal for feeding farmed fish and nutritional supplements for people.
- Increased **harvesting of krill threatens animals that feed on them.** These include fish, whales, seals, penguins and other seabirds.
 - A 2022 study that analysed over forty years of krill fishery data found that krill fishing was **highest in the regions surrounding the Western Antarctic Peninsula** and near the South Orkney Islands.
- Climate change and commercial fishing of the region need to be minimised, and therefore MPA is necessary.

What is the Status of MPAs in Antarctica?

- The Southern Ocean has two MPAs, one in the southern shelf of the **South Orkney Islands** and the other in the **Ross Sea**. These fully protect only 5% of the ocean.
- All types of fishing, other than scientific research, are **prohibited within the southern shelf of the South Orkney Islands MPA**. Discharges and dumping from fishing vessels are also not allowed.
- In Ross MPA, 72% of the waters are **closed to commercial fishing**.
- Since 2012, the European Union and Australia have proposed an MPA in East Antarctica. An MPA was proposed in the Weddell Sea by the EU and Norway and in the waters surrounding the **Antarctic Peninsula by Chile and Argentina**.
- In 2021, India extended its support for designating **East Antarctica and the Weddell Sea as MPA**.
 - But according to reports, China and Russia blocked these efforts at the **41st annual meeting of the [Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources \(CCAMLR\)](#)**.

What is Krill?

- Krill are small, **shrimp-like crustaceans that are found in all the world's oceans**. They are an important part of the marine food chain, serving as a primary food source for many species of fish, birds, and whales.
- Krill are typically **1 to 6 centimeters in length and are known for their distinctive appearance**, which includes large eyes, a translucent body, and long, feathery antennae.
- Krill plays a crucial role in **regulating the Earth's climate by removing [carbon dioxide](#)** from the atmosphere and storing it in the deep ocean.



[Source: DTE](#)

IBC Reform: Distribution of Proceeds

For Prelims: Non-Performing Assets (NPA), Liquidation value, National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

For Mains: Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), Proceeds Distributed Among Creditors Under the IBC.

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** has proposed several changes to the [Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code \(IBC\), 2016](#).

What are the Suggested Changes in IBC?

- The Ministry recognizes that **some creditors are worried about not receiving a fair share of the money** when a company's debts are resolved.
 - To address this, it suggests creating a **fair system for dividing the money among creditors**.
- This would involve using a **specific formula to divide the money based on the size of each creditor's claim**.
 - Any surplus over the liquidation value shall be pro-rated amongst all the creditors in ratio of their unsatisfied claim.

What is Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, 2016?

- The **Government implemented the IBC, 2016 to consolidate all laws related to insolvency and bankruptcy and to tackle [Non-Performing Assets \(NPA\)](#)**, a problem that has been pulling the Indian economy down for years.
 - **Insolvency** is a situation where **individuals or companies are unable to repay their outstanding debt**.
 - **Bankruptcy**, on the other hand, is a situation whereby a court of competent jurisdiction has **declared a person or other entity insolvent, having passed appropriate orders to resolve it and protect the rights of the creditors**. It is a legal declaration of one's inability to pay off debts.
- The IBC Covers all **individuals, companies, Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)** and partnership firms.
 - Adjudicating authority:
 - **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** for companies and LLPs.
 - **Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)** for individuals and partnership firms.

How are Proceeds Distributed Among Creditors Under the IBC?

- A company has various creditors — **public sector banks, private lenders, non-banking financial companies, trade creditors, vendors**, workmen, employees, governments, etc.
 - The Code puts these creditors into different categories based on the [nature of debt](#).
- **Banks, bond issuers, and lenders** are classified as financial creditors. Financial creditors are further **categorised as secured and unsecured creditors**, based on the security furnished by the borrower company.
- **Section 53** of the Code prescribes an order of priority in which proceeds will be distributed to **the creditors based on the liquidation value**.
- As per this waterfall mechanism, secured financial creditors rank the highest in the order of priority. They are **followed by unsecured financial creditors, government dues and, finally, operational creditors**.
 - Hence, financial creditors like banks have the first claim until exhaustion. **Proceeds may be extinguished at the level of financial creditors itself**, leaving almost nothing for other creditors in the waterfall mechanism.

What is the Jurisprudence on the Subject of Proceeds Distribution?

- The [Supreme Court](#) ruled on a case involving how to pay back **creditors in the Essar Steel India Limited case**.
 - The [National Company Law Appellate Tribunal \(NCLAT\)](#) had said that all creditors should be paid equally, regardless of whether they had security or not.
 - However, the **Supreme Court disagreed with the NCLAT and said that secured creditors should be paid back first** because their security interest needs to be protected.
- **Section 30(4)** of the Code allows for the **Committee of Creditors** to consider the value of

security interest when approving a resolution plan.

- The [United Nations Commission on International Trade Law \(UNCITRAL\) Legislative Guide on Insolvency Law](#) says that **secured creditors can receive payment based on the value of their security**, while unsecured and junior creditors may not receive anything.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following statements best describes the term 'Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A)', recently seen in the news? (2017)

- (a) It is a procedure for considering ecological costs of developmental schemes formulated by the Government.
- (b) It is a scheme of RBI for reworking the financial structure of big corporate entities facing genuine difficulties.
- (c) It is a disinvestment plan of the Government regarding Central Public Sector Undertakings.
- (d) It is an important provision in 'The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code' recently implemented by the Government.

Ans: (b)

[Source: IE](#)

Institution Of Eminence Scheme

For Prelims: UGC, World-class teaching systems, Higher education, Quality teaching and Research.

For Mains: Institution of Eminence Scheme.

Why in News?

There are many Institutes which, after being selected for the [Institution of Eminence \(IoE\)](#) Status, are still waiting for the IOE status for more than three years.

What is the Institution of Eminence Scheme?

- **About:**
 - The central Government formulated the IoE scheme to establish **20 prestigious educational institutions in the country**.
 - It was introduced by the [University Grants Commission \(UGC\)](#) in 2017 that required the IoE scheme to **receive accreditation within five years of notification**.
 - The status of 'Institute of Eminence' was launched to empower higher education institutions in India and **help them implement world-class teaching systems** to enhance affordable access to high-quality education.
 - Twenty institutions (10 Public and 10 Private Institutions) received the grant, and eleven among the selected ones got the **Institutions of Eminence status in April 2021**.
- **Objective:**

- **Excellence and Innovation:** To provide for higher education leading to excellence and innovations in such branches of knowledge as may be deemed fit at post-graduate, graduate and research degree levels.
- **Specialization:** To engage in areas of specialization to make distinctive contributions to the objectives of the university education system.
- **Global Rating:** To aim to be rated internationally for its teaching and research as a top hundred Institution in the world over time.
- **Quality Teaching and Research:** To provide for high quality teaching and research and for the advancement of knowledge and its dissemination
- **Criteria:**
 - **Global/National Ranking:** Only those institutions which have appeared in any of the global/national ranks (e.g., [QS](#), [NIRF](#)) shall be recommended for the IoE status. The Institutions should be among:
 - Top 50 in the National institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in their category.
 - Top 500 in internationally recognised rankings like the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, QS.
 - **Greenfield Proposals:** Only after exhausting the above criterion, if any slot remains vacant, shall consideration be given to yet to be established (Greenfield) proposals.
 - The term greenfield project generally refers to the initiation of a project without the need to consider any prior work.
 - The Greenfield Institutions would get a 3-year period to establish and operationalize the institution, and thereafter, EEC will consider giving IoE status to such institutions.
- **Benefits:**
 - **Autonomy:** Institutes with IOE tag will be given greater autonomy and freedom to decide fees, course durations and governance structures.
 - **Grant:** The public institutions under the IOE tag will receive a government grant of Rs 1,000 crore, while the private institutions will not get any funding under the scheme.

[Source: IE](#)

Daylight Saving Time

Why in News?

Recently, the Lebanon Government has delayed the start of [Daylight-Saving Time \(DST\)](#) by a month. Meanwhile, Greenland has chosen to **stay with DST forever**.

- **Lebanon** usually sets its clocks forward an hour **on the last Sunday in March**. However, its Prime Minister said this year, the clocks **would be reset on 21 April, without citing any reason**.

What is Daylight Saving Time?

- According to Norway-based Time and Date, DST is the **practice of setting the clocks forward one hour** from the standard time during the summer and back again in the autumn.
- This is done to make **better use of natural daylight**. India does not follow daylight saving time as **countries near the Equator do not experience high variations** in daytime hours between seasons.

What is the Significance of DST?

- Those in favour of DST argue that **it means a longer evening daytime**. Individuals will complete

their daily work routines an hour earlier, and that extra hour of daylight means **a lower consumption of energy.**

- In April 1916, during [World War I](#), Germany and Austria introduced DST to minimise the use of artificial lighting. It gradually caught on in many countries.
 - In the EU, clocks in the 28 member states move forward on the last Sunday in March and fall back on the last Sunday in October.

What are the Disadvantages of DST?

- According to a study in Popular Science magazine in the US, one hour of lost sleep in the US increases the **fatal crash rate by 5.4% to 7.6%** for six days following the transition.
- Other studies found a **higher rate of workplace injuries after the switch**, leading to lost days of work; a slight drop in stock market performance; health problems as a result of disruption of the [Circadian Rhythm](#).

[Source: IE](#)

Government to Re-examine Asiatic Lion Translocation Plan

Why in News?

The **Indian government** is re-examining the long-standing plan to **translocate Asiatic lions** (*Panthera leo persica*) from [Gir National Park](#) to [Kuno National Park](#).

What are the Developments Related to Translocation of Asiatic Lions?

- In 2013, the [Supreme Court](#) ordered the government to **translocate Asiatic lions from Gujarat to the Kuno National Park** in Madhya Pradesh. However, the lion translocation remains on paper.
- However, the Centre's 25-year roadmap for Project Lion has **no provision for any translocation outside Gujarat**.
 - Instead, the focus is on assisted **natural dispersal across Saurashtra by 2047**.
- The [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#) has recently pointed out that the lion population increased by **29% over the past 5 years**.
 - In view of the recent introduction of cheetahs in Kuno and NTCA is looking for measures to secure the lion's future beyond Gir.

What are the Key Points Related to Asiatic Lions?

- **About:**
 - The Asiatic Lion (also known as the **Persian Lion or Indian Lion**) is a member of the **Panthera Leo Leo** subspecies that is **restricted to India**.
 - Its **previous habitats consisted of West Asia** and the Middle East before it became extinct in these regions.
 - Asiatic lions are **slightly smaller than African lions**.
- **Distribution:**
 - Asiatic lions were **once distributed to the state of West Bengal in east and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh**, in central India.
 - At present **Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary** is the only abode of the Asiatic lion.
- **Protection Status:**
 - [IUCN Red List](#): Endangered
 - [CITES](#): Appendix I

- [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act 1972](#): Schedule I

Gir National Park

- **Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in the **Junagadh** district of Gujarat.
 - It was declared as a sanctuary in 1965 and a national park in 1975.
- The Gir Forests is the largest compact tract of **dry deciduous forests** in the **semi-arid western part of India**.
- Gir is often linked with "**Maldharis**" who have survived through the ages by having **symbiotic relationship with the lion**.

Kuno National Park

- **Kuno National Park** is a protected area located in the **Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh state in India**.
- It has a healthy population of **chital, sambar, nilgai, wild pig, chinkara and cattle**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Asiatic lion is naturally found in India only.
2. Double-humped camel is naturally found in India only.
3. One-horned rhinoceros is naturally found in India only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

[Source: IE](#)

Rapid Fire Current Affairs

SMILE and SHRESHTA Scheme

The [Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment](#) in India is implementing two schemes: **The Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA)** and the **Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)**.

SHRESHTA provides **financial assistance to NGOs for education projects related to students belonging to [Scheduled Castes](#)**, with three types of projects covered they are **Residential Schools**,

Non-Residential Schools, and Hostels, both for Primary and Secondary Students. The scheme has been revised and a new component, Mode-I, has been added for **quality residential education for meritorious SC students in top-class residential High Schools** through a nationwide entrance test conducted by [National Testing Agency \(NTA\)](#).

SMILE, on the other hand, supports **marginalized individuals for livelihood and enterprise, but does not specifically cover persons belonging to Scheduled Castes.**

Read more: [SHRESHTA](#), [SMILE](#)

Initiatives Against Cyber Crime

The Indian government has taken several measures to combat cybercrime and other criminal activities in the country. The [Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre \(I4C\)](#) has been established under the **Ministry of Home Affairs to provide a platform for dealing with cybercrimes in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.**

The I4C has recommended the **blocking of over 500 internet-based applications**, which were found to be involved in criminal activities. In addition, the **National Database of Offends of Foreign Origin (NDOFO)** has been launched, which is a **registry of foreigners involved in crime in India and has details of convicted and accused foreign offenders**

The [National Database of Sexual Offenders \(NDSO\)](#) is another initiative that has a **searchable registry of convicts involved in sexual offences such as rape, molestation, stalking, and child abuse.** The NDSO has a record of 13 lakh offenders so far. To further combat financial fraud, **a cyber fraud helpline number 1930 has been established.** If a victim of financial fraud complains immediately on the toll-free number, agencies can freeze the SIM card and bank account involved in the crime, increasing the chance of recovering the money.

Read more: [Cyber crimes](#)

Conducive Policy in J&K

During the annual session of the [Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry \(ASSOCHAM\)](#), Indian government highlighted its efforts to create a **conducive environment for investment in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)** through improved law and order situations and policies.

The government is also working towards reducing **logistics costs to 7.5% of GDP from the current 13%**, as development without the development of infrastructure and reduction of logistics costs is not possible. To achieve this, the government has planned to invest ₹100 lakh crore in infrastructure, including mega projects such as **doubling railway lines, dedicated freight corridors, and 11 industrial corridors.**

Read More: [Jammu and Kashmir](#)

India and Romania Defence Cooperation

The **Department for Defence Policy, Planning and International Relations of Romania** held a bilateral meeting with Indian officials. The meeting covered a wide range of issues, including **military to military cooperation, military training and courses, defence co-development and co-production, and capacity building.**

The **two countries signed an Agreement on Defence Cooperation**, further enhancing bilateral defence cooperation. During the meeting, both sides discussed regional security challenges and expressed their commitment to work together to enhance cooperation in all defence sectors.

This meeting reflects the growing partnership between India and Romania in the field of defence, as both countries seek to strengthen their capabilities and promote stability and security in the region.



PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/29-03-2023/print>