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Important Facts For Prelims (19th March 2019)

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Vaquita Porpoise

- Recently a dead **Vaquita Porpoise** was found in a fishnet off the **coast of Mexico**.
- It is **critically endangered (IUCN) marine animal** of which only about 10 remain in the world.
- It is also known as "**the panda of the sea**" for the **distinctive black circles around its eyes**.
- Vaquita Porpoises are among the **ocean's smallest cetaceans** and they only **reside in the northern Gulf of California**.

The Cetaceans are one of the most **distinctive and highly specialized aquatic mammals**. They include **blue whale, dolphins, blind river dolphins, Porpoise, etc.**

- The vaquitas are threatened primarily by **gillnet fishing for the totoaba fish**, another endangered species in the area that is hunted for its swim bladder, considered a delicacy in China. Dried totoaba bladders are often smuggled through the United States to China.
- Therefore, the **conservation of Vaquita primarily rests with US, China and Mexico**.



Dongria Kondh Tribe

- The Dongria Kondh tribe live in **Niyamgiri hill range of Odisha state.**
- They derive their **name from dongar**, meaning **'hill'** and **worship the mountain god Niyam Raja.**
- The Dongria have **distinctive jewellery, tattoos and hairstyles.** Women wear many rings through their ears and three through their noses, while boys wear two nose rings. Dongria girls wear clips in their hair and rings and beads around their necks.
- The Dongria Kondh have **no overarching political or religious leader;** clans and villages have their own leaders and individuals with specific ceremonial functions.
- The Dongria believe that animals, plants, mountains and other specific sites and streams have a **life-force or soul, jela**, which comes from the mother goddess.

AFINDEX-19

- The **Africa-India Field Training Exercise-2019 called AFINDEX-19** started at Aundh Military Station, **Pune.**
- India and contingents of the **17 African Nations** i.e. Benin, Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe are participating in the exercise.
- The aim of the exercise is to **practice the participating nations in planning and conduct of Humanitarian Mine Assistance and Peacekeeping Operations.**
- It is a positive step towards **growing political and military ties** between India and African nations and will boost the already strong strategic cooperation between the countries.