Multi-taxon Global Freshwater Fauna Assessment

Why in News?

The recently published study of multi-taxon global freshwater fauna assessment has identified Western Ghats as a hotspot of threatened freshwater species.

- **Study by** – ***IUCN*** (International Union for Conservation of Nature).
- **Global assessment** – It evaluates the extinction risk and conservation status for diverse freshwater fauna groups.
- It is the *1st ever multi-taxon global freshwater fauna assessment* for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- It is a comprehensive assessments involving contributions from *more than 1,000 species experts over 20 years.*
- It underscores the historical underappreciation of freshwater ecosystems in global environmental governance
- **Coverage** – 23,496 *Decapod crustaceans, Fishes and Odonates*.
- **Findings** – It revealed that a staggering 1/4th of the freshwater fauna are threatened with extinction, and a record of 89 confirmed and 187 suspected extinctions since 1500 AD.
- **Hotspots of Threatened Freshwater Species**
  - **Lake Victoria** - Kenya, Tanzania & Uganda.
  - **Lake Titicaca** - Bolivia & Peru.
  - **Wet Zone** - Sri Lanka.
  - **Western Ghats** - India.
- **Threat in Western Ghats** – It harbours over 300 freshwater fish species of which *more than 1/3rd face extinction*.

***Western Ghats** is the only region in Asia with 2 endemic families of freshwater fishes which are exclusively found in groundwater and subterranean systems.*

*The iconic **Humpbacked mahseer**, a critically endangered megafish that can grow up to weigh 60 kg, was found in Western ghats.*

- Among Indian States, *Kerala has the highest number of threatened freshwater fishes*, with 74 of its 188 fish species for which Red List assessments are available categorized as threatened.

***Periyar River** stands out as a critical conservation priority due to its high concentration of endemic and threatened freshwater fish species.*

Threats	**Impact on Freshwater Species** (Decapods, Fishes and Odonates)
Pollution	54%
Dams and water extraction	39%
Land-use	37%
Invasive species and disease	28%
Habitat loss and degradation	84%
Threats	**Impact on Tetrapods**
Agricultural practices	74%
Logging	49%

Climate change and severe weather events pose a substantial risk, impacting nearly 1/5th of threatened freshwater species.

Reference

The Hindu| 1st Multi-taxon Global Freshwater Fauna Assessment

