Prelim Bits 02-01-2019

Cinereous Vulture

- It is one of the heaviest and largest raptors in the world.
- It is listed as Near Threatened in IUCN Red list and in Appendix II of CITES.
- Its geographical range expands from European countries (such as Portugal, Spain, Croatia, Serbia etc), Middle East countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia etc), Central Asia (Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikstan, Iran etc) to Asia (India, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Korea, Vietnam).
- It suffers an ongoing decline of population in its Asiatic strongholds, despite the fact that in parts of Europe numbers are now increasing.
- It generally occupies forest, shrubland and grassland.
- During the winter, it migrates from the mountainous regions of Europe and Asia to warmer places, including India.
- The species was recently spotted in the state of Jharkhand for the first time in the region.

Renaming of Allahabad

- Union Home Ministry has approved the UP government's proposal to rename Allahabad as Prayagraj.
- For changing the name of a village or town or a city, just an executive order is needed.
- The renaming of a state requires amendment of the Constitution with a simple majority in Parliament.
- A bill to change the name of the state shall be introduced in either House of Parliament only on the recommendation of the President.
- The bill should also referred by the President to the Legislature of that State for expressing its views.
- According to the existing guidelines for renaming of railway stations, villages, towns and cities,

1. It is mandatory to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Union Home Ministry by the respective state government.
2. The Union Home Ministry considers the proposals of name change in consultations with Ministry of Railways, Department of Posts and Survey of

India.

3. These organisations have to confirm that there is no such city, town or village in their records with a name similar to the proposed one.

US & Israel Quits UNESCO

- U.S and Israel have formally quitted the UNESCO recently.
- It followed the allegations that UNESCO criticised Israel's policies of East Jerusalem's occupation and the grant of full-time membership to Palestine in defiance of the American and Israeli pressure.
- Israel initiated the withdrawal process after the US declared to step out of UNESCO in 2017.
- Withdrawal of these countries would not affect the UN organisation financially as both Israel and the US had stopped funding it since Palestine's membership was granted in 2011.

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UNESCO

- It is responsible for promoting peace, social justice, human rights and international security through International cooperation on educational, science and cultural programs.
- It has 195 member states and is based in Paris, France.
- It accorded recognition in 2011 to Palestine as its 195th member.
- It is a global development agency with missions that include promoting sex education, literacy, clean water and equality for women.
- It is also responsible for promoting peace, social justice, human rights and international security through International cooperation on educational, science and cultural programs.
- It is known for its World Heritage Mission which encourages world countries to protect Natural & Cultural Heritage sites.
- It publishes the Global Education Monitoring report and Gender Parity Index.
- It also leads the Man and Biosphere Programme for protecting Biosphere reserves across the world.

Central Information Commission

- The government has appointed Sudhir Bhargava as the new Chief Information Commissioner.
- The Commission has been constituted under the Right to Information Act, 2005.
- The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.

- It is the highest appellate body under the Right to Information Act.
- The Commission includes 1 Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and not more than 10 Information Commissioners (IC) who are appointed by the President of India.
- Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005 provides for search committee to appoint CIC and IC which includes,
    i. The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee;
    ii. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha ; and
    iii. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- CIC and other ICs shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment.
- Every IC shall on vacating his office be eligible for appointment as the CIC, provided that the term of office shall not extend 5 years in aggregate.
- The salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the CIC and IC shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioner respectively.
- The decisions of the Commission are final and binding.

Samwad with Students Initiative

- ISRO has recently launched a new platform named “Samwad with Students”.
- Through the SwS initiative, ISRO aims to constantly engage youngsters across India to capture their scientific temperament.
- The first SwS event saw 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools interact with ISRO Chairman.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express

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