Prelim Bits 15-05-2019

Asiatic Lion

- CSIR has recently sequenced the entire genome of Asiatic lion for the first time.
- The genome sequencing has already been done for big cats like Royal Bengal tiger, African Cheetah and Jaguar.
- With the complete genome of Asiatic lion, a comparative study of all these cats would be possible.
- It would also help to better understand the evolution of Asiatic lion.
- Asiatic Lion that once ranged from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India were almost driven to extinction by hunting and habitat loss.
- According to 2015 census, it is found in Gir Protected Area Network that includes Gir National Park, Gir Sanctuary, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary adjoining reserved forests, protected forests.
- It is listed as “Endangered” in the IUCN red list of threatened species and in Schedule I in CITES Appendix.
- It is included in 21 critically endangered species included in the Centrally Sponsored Scheme - Development of Wildlife Habitat (CSS-DWH).
- Asiatic lion conservation project will be funded under this scheme.

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index

- STRI is released by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- It was launched in 2014 and it ranks countries (both OECD and non-OECD) based on their services trade policies.
- The index is now available for 2018 for a total of 45 economies and 22 sectors.
- It has placed Indian service sector as highly restrictive in areas such as FDI.
- India has found problems with the current method under which index is being calculated.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

- OECD, an organisation dedicated to economic development, consists of 36 member countries.
- It includes not only most advanced countries but also emerging countries like

Mexico, Chile and Turkey.

- European Commission also participates alongside Members in discussions on the OECD.
- It also works closely with **non-member** countries like China, India, Brazil and South Africa through "Enhanced Engagement" programmes.
- Though India is not a member country, it is part of the various committee setup under OECD.
- It administers and publishes the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is a regular assessment of the attainment of 15-year-olds in three areas of knowledge thus measuring the performance of educational systems across countries.
- India is a signatory of this policy.

Square Kilometre Array

- SKA project is an international effort to build the world's largest radio telescope, with eventually over a square kilometre (one million square metres) of collecting area.
- It will use 1000s of dishes and up to a million low-frequency antennas that will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail and survey the entire sky much faster than any system currently in existence.
- South Africa's Karoo region and Western Australia's Murchison Shire were chosen as co-hosting locations for this project.
- Karoo will host the core of the high and mid frequency dishes and Murchison will host the low-frequency antennas.
- **Recent Developments -** MeerLITCH is the world's first optical telescope linked to a radio telescope launched in South Africa**.**
- The device forms part of the SKA project and will be linked to MeerKAT, a radio telescope located 200km away.
- Scientists at Cambridge have finished designing the data processor of SKA's telescopes.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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