UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 04-05-2020

Gangetic Dolphins

- The South Asian river dolphin (Platanista gangetica) is an endangered freshwater or river dolphin found in the region of Indian Subcontinent which is split into two subspecies,

1. **Ganges river dolphin (P. g. gangetica, ~3,500 individuals) -** The Ganges river dolphin is primarily found in the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers and their tributaries in India, Bangladesh and Nepal
2. **Indus river dolphin (P. g. minor, ~1,500 individuals) -** These are found only in the main channel of the Indus River in Pakistan and active channels connected to it between the Jinnah and Kotri barrages, and in the River Beas (a tributary of the Indus) in Punjab in India.

- The Ganges river dolphin has been recognized by the government of India as its National Aquatic Animal (and is the official animal of the Guwahati city, Assam.)
- This decision was taken in the first meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) chaired by then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2009.
- The Indus river dolphin has been named as the National Mammal of Pakistan.
- Both Gangetic and Indus river dolphins are categorized as Endangered under IUCN red list.

Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary

- Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary is located in Bhagalpur District of Bihar, India.
- The sanctuary is a 60 km stretch of the Ganges River from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon in Bhagalpur District.
- Designated in 1991, it is protected area for the endangered Gangetic dolphins in Asia.

National Board for Wild Life

- NBWL is a statutory body as it has been constituted under Section 5 A the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- It is the apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries i.e. Protected Areas.
- In 2003, NBWL was constituted its term lapsed in 2013, in 2014 it was reconstituted (was notified on July 22, 2014).
- It is a 47-member board (including the chairman) which usually meets once a year - It is chaired by Prime minister.
- The environment ministry has delegated all powers of the NBWL to a compliant Standing Committee which regularly meets and clears projects in Protected Areas.
- The National Board may, at its discretion, constitute a Standing Committee under sub-section (1) of Section 5B to be chaired by Union Minister in charge of Forests and Wildlife.

- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has approved a slew of wildlife clearances for 'developmental' projects across the country even as the country is in lockdown mode.
- Recently NBWL met virtually, it is to be noted NBWL has not met for the last six years.
- It has a Standing Committee that issues policy decisions and clearances, it has given clearance to following projects.

1. Etalin hydropower project, Arunachal Pradesh.
2. Highway construction in Goa, which passes through the Mollem Wildlife Sanctuary.
3. Nagpur-Mumbai superhighway over 32,000 trees will be felled and the proposed design passes through 48 villages.
4. Railway bridge in Madhya Pradesh and Telangana through the Kawal tiger corridor.

Mollem Wild Life Sanctuary

- Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary and Mollem National Park is a 240 square kilometres protected area located in the Western Ghats of South India, in Sanguem taluk, Goa State, along the eastern border with Karnataka.
- National Highway 4A divides it into two parts and the Mormugao - Londa railway line passes through the area.
- It contains several important temples dating to the Kadambas of Goa, and home to waterfalls, such as Dudhsagar Falls and Tambdi Falls.
- The parkland is also home to a community of nomadic buffalo herders known as the Dhangar.

Kawal Tiger Corridor

- Kawal Tiger Reserve is located at Jannaram mandal of Mancherial District (Old Adilabad district) in Telangana state of India.
- Govt of India declared Kawal wildlife sanctuary as Tiger Reserve in 2012.
- The reserve is the oldest sanctuary in the northern Telangana region of the state.
- This sanctuary is catchment for the rivers Godavari and Kadam, which flow towards the south of the sanctuary.

Etalin Hydropower Project

- The Project is based on the river Dibang. It is proposed to be completed in 7 years.
- Dibang is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River which flows through the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
- It envisages construction of two dams over the tributaries of Dibang: Dir and Tangon.
- The Project falls under the "richest bio-geographical province of the Himalayan zone" and would be located at the junction of the Palaearctic, Indo-Chinese and Indo-Malayan bio-geographic regions.
- The Project is in accordance with the Government's push to establish prior user rights on rivers that originate in China and an effort to fast-track projects in the north-east.
- It is expected to be one of the biggest hydropower projects in India in terms of installed capacity.

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park

- It is a national park in Assam, India, located in Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts.
- It was designated a Biosphere Reserve in July 1997.
- The park is bounded by the Brahmaputra and Lohit Rivers in the north and Dibru river in the south. It mainly consists of moist mixed semi-evergreen forests, moist mixed deciduous forests, canebrakes and grasslands.
- It is the largest salix swamp forest in north-eastern India, with a tropical monsoon climate with a hot and wet summer and cool and usually dry winter.
- Annual rainfall ranges from 2,300 to 3,800 mm (91 to 150 in).
- It is a haven for many endangered species and rich in fish diversity.

Biogeographic Zones

- The Biogeographic Zones are the large distinctive units of similar ecology, biome representation, community and species, e.g., The Himalaya, The Western Ghats.
- **Palaearctic Zone** includes arctic and temperate Eurasia, and all islands surrounding the continent in the Arctic, in the sea of Japan, and the eastern half of the North Atlantic.
- It thus also includes the Macaronesian islands, Mediterranean North Africa and Arabia.
- Regions and subregions of the world.

1. **Holarctic region** = Nearctic + Palearctic subregions.
2. **Holotropical region** = Neotropical + Afrotropical + Oriental + Australian tropical subregions.
3. **Austral** = Andean + Cape + Australian temperate + Neozealandic + Neoguinean subregions.



Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification 2020

- Union government has recently released Environment Impact Assessment notification 2020, it set to replace the EIA notification 2006.
- It is released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), it requires the public to respond within 60 days of being issued.
- It is being criticized for absurdly released during a nationwide lockdown, it has several dangerous loopholes such as

1. Public hearings are no longer mandatory for several projects,
2. Project expansion rules have been eased,
3. Public consultation process is weaker,
4. It legitimizes the wrongdoings by industries.

- For instance in March 2017, the MoEFCC issued a notification to appraise projects which have started work on-site without taking prior environmental clearance in terms of the provisions of the 2006 EIA notification.
- It was supposed to be an exception, but has since become a norm.
- Taking it a step further, the 2020 notification states that 'Such violations being recurring in nature may come to the notice in future during the process of appraisal or monitoring or inspection by Regulatory

Authorities.

- Therefore, the Ministry deems it necessary to lay down the procedure to bring such violation projects under the regulations in the interest of the environment, rather than leaving them unregulated and unchecked, which will be more damaging to the environment’.

Non-Allied Movement

- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a forum of 120 developing world states that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.
- After the United Nations, it is the largest grouping of states worldwide.
- Drawing on the principles agreed at the Bandung Conference in 1955, the NAM was established in 1961 in Belgrade, SR Serbia, Yugoslavia through an initiative of the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito.
- This led to the first Conference of Heads of State or Governments of Non-Aligned Countries.
- The term non-aligned movement first appears in the fifth conference in 1976, where participating countries are denoted as "members of the movement".
- The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement represent nearly two-thirds of the United Nations' members and contain 55% of the world population.
- Membership is particularly concentrated in countries considered to be developing or part of the Third World, though the Non-Aligned Movement also has a number of developed nations.
- Although many of the Non-Aligned Movement's members were actually quite closely aligned with one or another of the superpowers (such as the People's Republic of China, an observer, or the Russian Federation, not participating in the Non-Aligned Movement), the movement still maintained cohesion throughout the Cold War, even despite several conflicts between members which also threatened the movement.
- In the years since the Cold War's end, it has focused on developing multilateral ties and connections as well as unity among the developing nations of the world, especially those within the Global South.

Virtual Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit

- Indian PM will participate in the Virtual Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit through Video Conferencing today.
- The summit will discuss and decide on the enhanced coordination of the member states in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

- The special online summit of the heads of state and government of the NAM member states has been convened at the initiative of President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, in his capacity as current chair of the Movement.
- The summit will conclude with a political declaration of the Movement as Uniting against COVID-19.

Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)

- The Central Administrative Tribunal had been established under Article 323 - A of the Constitution for adjudication of disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or other authorities under the control of the Government.
- In pursuance of Article 323-A, the Parliament has passed the Administrative Tribunals Act in 1985.
- The act authorizes the Central government to establish one Central Administrative Tribunal and the state administrative tribunals.
- This act opened a new chapter in the sphere of providing speedy and inexpensive justice to the aggrieved public servants.
- There are 17 Benches and 21 Circuit Benches in the Central Administrative Tribunal all over India.
- The CAT is a specialist body consisting of Administrative Members and Judicial Members who by virtue of their specialized knowledge are better equipped to dispense speedy and effective justice.
- It was established in 1985.
- A Chairman who has been a sitting or retired Judge of a High Court heads the Central Administrative Tribunal.
- It exercises jurisdiction only in relation to the service matters of the parties covered by the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985.
- The Tribunal is guided by the principles of natural justice in deciding cases and is not bound by the procedure, prescribed by the Civil Procedure Code.
- Under Section 17 of the Administrative Tribunal Act, 1985, the Tribunal has been conferred with the power to exercise the same jurisdiction and authority in respect of contempt of itself as a High Court.
- The conditions of service of the Chairman and Members are the same as applicable to a Judge of High Court as per the Administrative Tribunals (Amendment) Act, 2006.
- The orders of Central Administrative Tribunal are challenged by way of Writ Petition under Article 226/227 of the Constitution before respective

High Court in whose territorial jurisdiction the Bench of the Tribunal is situated.

- Union government recently clarified that all service matters of the employees of the Central government and the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh will be heard by the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) Bench of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The clarification came a day after lawyers and regional parties opposed the shifting of service matters, now pending before Jammu and Kashmir courts, to the CAT, Chandigarh.

World Press Freedom Day

- The United Nations General Assembly declared May 3 to be World Press Freedom Day.
- It is observed to raise awareness of the importance of freedom of the press and remind governments of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression enshrined under Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- It also mark the anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, a statement of free press principles put together by African newspaper journalists in Windhoek in 1991.

Reporters without Borders

- Reporters without Borders, also known as Reporters sans frontières (RSF), is a leading international non-profit and non-governmental organization that safeguards the right to freedom of information.
- Its mandate is to promote free, independent and pluralistic journalism and to defend media workers.
- Its advocacy is founded on the belief that everyone requires access to the news and information, inspired by Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights that recognizes the right to receive and share information regardless of frontiers, along with other international rights charters.
- RSF has consultative status at the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the International Organization of the Francophonie.

Press Freedom Index

- The Press Freedom Index is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by Reporters without Borders based upon the organization’s own assessment of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year.

- It intends to reflect the degree of freedom that journalists, news organizations, and netizens have in each country, and the efforts made by authorities to respect this freedom.
- Reporters without Borders is careful to note that the index only deals with press freedom and does not measure the quality of journalism nor does it look at human rights violations in general.
- The report is partly based on a questionnaire which asks questions about pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure.
- It also includes violations of the free flow of information on the Internet.
- Violence against journalists, netizens, and media assistants, including abuses attributable to the state, armed militias, clandestine organizations or pressure groups, are monitored by RSF staff during the year and are also part of the final score.
- A smaller score on the report corresponds to greater freedom of the press as reported by the organization.
- According to recent report findings India dropped two places on the global press freedom index ranking to 142nd place in the list of 180 countries.
- India’s neighbors Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka are ranked higher in the list.
- The report also highlighted that no murders of journalists in India in 2019, as against six in 2018, the security situation for the country's media might seem, on the face of it, to have improved.
- However, there have been constant press freedom violations, including police violence against journalists, ambushes by political activists, and reprisals instigated by criminal groups or corrupt local officials.
- Norway is ranked first in the Index for the fourth year running.
- China at 177, is just three places above North Korea, which is at 180.

Draft Rules for Unlinking TV channels

- Information Broadcasting Ministry has drafted new guidelines for up linking TV channels.
- Guidelines to uplink and down link satellite television channels were last issued by the I&B Ministry in 2011.
- The highlights of the new draft guidelines are

- There will be no need for channels to get mandatory clearance every year.
- Permits will be given to Indian teleports to uplink foreign channels to facilitate more business.

- As of now, the channels registered under the 'news' category can live-telecast events.
- But the rest needs a written "temporary up linking" permission from the ministry and local administration, even to telecast live events such as reality shows.
- According to the new draft, such non-news channels can live telecast an event (other than in the nature of news and current affairs) after registering itself online on 'Broadcast Seva, a ministry portal, at least five days before the event.
- This would facilitate the live telecast of many sporting events, award functions, socio-religious and cultural programmes and even radio addresses that are not qualified as news.
- The channels can make a calendar of sorts of all the non-political events they would want to show, and proceed with the registrations beforehand.
- To broadcast an event like IPL or any traditional sport which was watched enthusiastically, channels had to pay Rs 1 lakh a day each and also wait for days for a written permission, now it has been done way.
- The decision as to whether or not the event being uplinked live is of the nature of news and current affairs will be of the central government, and shall be binding on the channel.
- The preference to Indian satellites was part of the government's policy since 1997, this time the ministry has made it explicit that a satellite channel can only be uplinked on 'C' band or 'Ku' band, but not both simultaneously, and the latter will be restricted only to Indian satellites.
- The new rules also permit a company or limited liability partnership (LLP) to launch a teleport, hub or uplink a channel.
- The ministry has retained the rule for security clearances for TV channels, the clearance is granted by the home ministry.
- It is valid for ten years, but can be revoked if the home ministry sees repeated violations.

Up linking and Down linking

- The communication going from a satellite to ground is called downlink, and when it is going from ground to a satellite it is called uplink.
- When an uplink is being received by the spacecraft at the same time a downlink is being received by Earth, the communication is called two-way.
- If there is only an uplink happening, this communication is called upload.
- If there is only a downlink happening, the communication is called one-way.
- The Ku and C bands are part of a spectrum of frequencies, ranging from 1

to 40 gigahertz, that are used in satellite communications.

- GSAT-30, for instance has the capacity to provide coverage and communication services to Indian mainland and islands through the Ku-band and wide coverage covering the Gulf countries, a large number of Asian countries and Australia through the C-band.

Source: The Hindu, News on Air, Economic Times

