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Project Lion

- Project Lion was on 15th August, 2020, on the lines of Project Tiger and Project Elephant.
- The programme has been launched for the conservation of the Asiatic Lion, whose last remaining wild population is in Gujarat's Asiatic Lion Landscape (ALL).
- The Wildlife Institute of India, along with the Gujarat Forest Department, had created a Project Lion proposal.
- Under the proposal six new sites has identified for possible lion relocation in the future include:

1. Madhav National Park, Madhya Pradesh
2. Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan
3. Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan
4. Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh
5. Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan
6. Jessore-Balaram Ambaji WLS and adjoining landscape, Gujarat

- The proposal seeks to create free ranging lion populations within Gujarat and in India to counter lack of genetic diversity within Asiatic lions.

Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary

- Kuno National Park is a protected area in Madhya Pradesh that received the status of national park in 2018.
- The protected area was established in 1981 as a wildlife sanctuary.
- It is in the Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion.
- Union government has chosen this place for translocating Asiatic Lions and re-introduction of African Cheetas.

Yellow Dust

- Recently North Korean authorities have urged citizens to remain indoors to avoid contact with a mysterious cloud of 'yellow dust' blowing in from China.
- Yellow dust is actually sand from deserts in China and Mongolia that high

speed surface winds carry into both North and South Korea during specific periods every year.
- The sand particles tend to mix with other toxic substances such as industrial pollutants, as a result of which the 'yellow dust' is known to cause a number of respiratory ailments.
- Usually, when the dust reaches unhealthy levels in the atmosphere, authorities urge people to remain indoors and limit physical activity, particularly heavy exercise and sport.
- Sometimes, when the concentration of yellow dust in the atmosphere crosses around 800 micrograms/cubic meter, schools are shut and outdoor events cancelled in the affected areas.

Two New Ramsar Sites

- Recently, Kabartal Wetland (Bihar) and Asan Conservation Reserve (Uttrakhand) have been designated as Ramsar sites.
- Earlier in 2020, India designated 10 more wetlands as a Ramsar site, taking the total number from 27 to 37.
- With 2 more inclusions, the total number of Ramsar sites in India is 39, the highest in South Asia.

Kabartal Wetland

- It is known as Kanwar Jheel, it covers 2,620 hectares of the Indo-Gangetic plains in the Begusarai district of Bihar.
- It acts as a vital flood buffer for the region besides providing livelihood opportunities to local communities.
- It is also a valuable site for fish biodiversity with over 50 species documented.
- It is an important stopover along the Central Asian Flyway, with 58 migratory waterbirds using it to rest and refuel.
- Five critically endangered species inhabit the site, including three vultures – the red-headed vulture (Sarcogyps calvus), white-rumped vulture (Gyps bengalensis) and Indian vulture (Gyps indicus) – and two waterbirds, the sociable lapwing (Vanellus gregarius) and Baer's pochard (Aythya baeri).

Asan Conservation Reserve

- ACR is a 444-hectare stretch of the Asan River running down to its confluence with the Yamuna River in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand.
- It is Uttarakhand's first Ramsar Site.

- The damming of the River by the Asan Barrage in 1967 resulted in siltation above the dam wall, which helped to create some of the Site's bird-friendly habitats.
- These habitats support 330 species of birds including the critically endangered red-headed vulture (Sarcogyps calvus), white-rumped vulture (Gyps bengalensis) and Baer's pochard (Aythya baeri).
- Other non-avian species present include 49 fish species, one of these being the endangered Putitora mahseer (Tor putitora).

Factors that play a role in Delhi's Air Pollution

- Air pollution in Delhi and the whole of the Indo Gangetic plains is a complex phenomenon that is dependent on a variety of factors.
- The first and foremost is the input of pollutants, followed by weather and local conditions.
- The other factors of air pollution in NCR are as follows

1. **Thermal Inversion** - When temperature dips, it lowers the inversion height which is the layer beyond which pollutants cannot disperse into the upper layer of the atmosphere. The concentration of pollutants in the air increases when this happens.
2. **Wind speed -** High wind speeds are highly effective at dispersing pollutants but winters bring dip in wind speeds as compared to summers.
3. **Stubble burning** 12-26% of all particulate matter in Delhi is of bio-mass burning.

Srisailam Hydroelectric Power Plant

- Srisailam Hydroelectric Power Plant is constructed across the Krishna River located between Kurnool and Mahabubnagar districts.
- The construction of the project started in 1980.
- The Srisailam is a Gravity & Masonry type dam.
- Recently Srisailam Hydroelectric power station started its operation after, witnessing a massive fire accident in August 2020.

Gravity Dam

- A gravity dam is a type of dam which is constructed from concrete or stone masonry.
- It is designed in such a way so that it is capable of holding the water pressure by using the weight of its material alone and doesn't depend on other parts.
- It will remain unaffected even after the strongest earthquakes happen.

- Tungabhadra Dam, Sardar Sarovar Dam, Bhakra Dam, Hirakud Dam are some of the gravity dams located in India.

PM Swanidhi Scheme

- Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched a micro-credit facility for street vendors under the Swanidhi Scheme.
- It is aimed at benefiting over 50 lakh vendors who had their businesses operational on or before March 24.
- The loans are meant to help kick-start activity for vendors who have been left without any income since the lockdown was implemented on March 25.
- The scheme is valid until March 2022.
- Under the scheme street vendors will be able to apply for a working capital loan of up to ₹10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments within a year.
- On timely/early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer on a six-monthly basis.
- The loans would be without collateral, there will be no penalty on early repayment of the loan.
- Recently UP govt secures first rank in disbursing loans under PM Swanidhi Scheme
- State has ranked first in all the categories - Applications, Sanctions and Disbursements of the loans under the scheme.
- Seven cities of the state also find place in the list of top 10 cities of the country.

Source: News on Air, The Hindu, Indian Express

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