

NEWS TODAY

UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) report on "State of the World's Migratory Species" launched

- This First ever report was launched by Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) at 14th Conference of Parties in Uzbekistan.
- **Key findings of report**
 - ⊕ 1 in 5 CMS-listed species are **threatened with extinction (TWE)** and **44%** have **decreasing population trend**.
 - ◆ **82% of Appendix I species** are TWE and **76%** are **declining**.
 - ◆ **18% of Appendix II species** are **globally threatened** and **42%** have **decreasing trend**.
 - ⊕ **97% of CMS-listed fish** are TWE.
 - ⊕ **Extinction risk is growing** for both CMS listed species and all migratory species.
 - ⊕ Globally, **399 migratory species** (threatened or near TWE) are **not currently listed under CMS**.
 - ⊕ **2 Main threats to migratory species:** Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation; Overexploitation.
 - ⊕ **Other threats:** Climate change & severe weather, Pollution, Invasive species and diseases etc.
- **Importance of Migratory Species:** Climate change mitigation; Regulate Ecosystem through predation and grazing; important source of food and ecotourism attractions etc.
- **Recommendations**
 - ⊕ **Identify, protect, connect and restore** sites for migratory species.
 - ⊕ **Strengthen** collaborative international efforts to tackle overexploitation.
 - ⊕ **Scale up efforts to tackle climate change**, and light, noise, chemical and plastic pollution.
 - ⊕ **Prioritize research** on 'Data Deficient' migratory species.

About CMS

- **Signed in 1979, CMS (Bonn Convention)** is an environmental treaty under aegis of **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- It provides a **global platform for conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals** and their habitats.
- **CMS Appendices**
 - ⊕ **Appendix I:** Migratory species that have been assessed as being in danger of extinction.
 - ⊕ **Appendix II:** Migratory species which require international agreements for their conservation.
- CMS has **133 parties including India**.

First Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council meeting of Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) held in United States

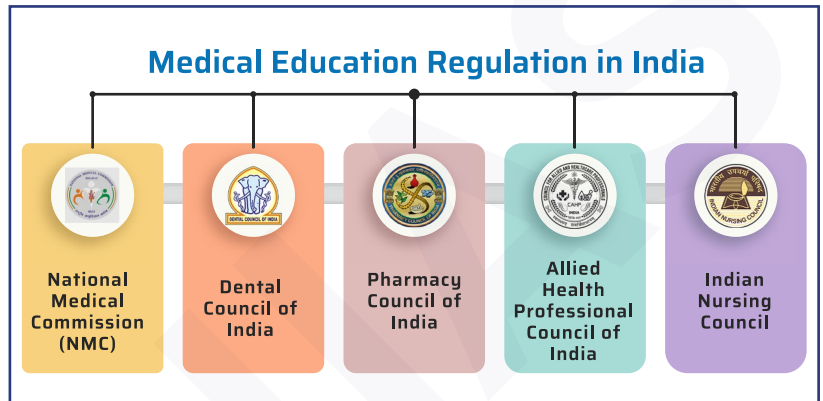
- GBFF aims to scale up financing for implementation of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).
 - ⊕ **Ratified by 186 countries** and launched in 2023 at Seventh GEF Assembly in Vancouver, Canada.
 - ⊕ **Decisions of GBFF Council** are to be taken by consensus.
 - ⊕ **World Bank** invited to serve as **Trustee of GBFF**.
- **Key highlights of meeting**
 - ⊕ GEF's member government have **agreed to invest \$1.1 billion for international action on biodiversity**, climate change, nature renewal, and pollution control.
 - ⊕ They **endorsed \$203 million for 21 climate change adaptation projects** funded by Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund.
 - ⊕ **Spain announced 10 million euros to GBFF**, adding to contributions announced by Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan.
 - ⊕ **GBFF Resource Allocation Policy and Project Cycle Policy** were approved to allocate donor funds based on availability.
- **About KMGBF**
 - ⊕ **Adopted at COP15 (held in Montreal)** to UN Convention on Biological Diversity.
 - ⊕ KMGBF has **set 23 targets to be achieved by 2030** which include **30% conservation of land and sea, 50% reduction of invasive species**, raising at least \$200 billion per year etc.

About GEF

- Established in **1992 Rio Earth Summit**, it is a **partnership of 18 agencies** to address world's most challenging environmental issues.
- **GEF's main governing body i.e. Council** comprises **32 members appointed by constituencies of GEF member countries** (14 and 16 from developed and developing countries respectively, and 2 economies in transition).
- GEF serves as a "**financial mechanism**" to **five conventions**:
 - ⊕ Convention on Biological Diversity.
 - ⊕ UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
 - ⊕ Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.
 - ⊕ UN Convention to Combat Desertification.
 - ⊕ Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare released report on Quality of Medical Education

- Primary objective of report was to **find areas of improvement** to ensure that medical graduates are well-equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of healthcare delivery.
- **Status of Medical Education in India**
 - ⊕ One of the largest medical education systems with **702 medical colleges**.
 - ⊕ India achieved a **doctor to population ratio of 1:856 (WHO recommends 1:1000)**.
 - ⊕ Actual **health research expenditure** as a percentage of GDP has constantly remained at **0.02 since 2021-22**.
- **Issues in Medical Education System**
 - ⊕ **Peculiar paradox** as system produces significant number of physicians while many Indian students pursue their medical education abroad.
 - ⊕ **Shortage of seats** at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
 - ⊕ **Uneven distribution of medical colleges** with high concentration in urban areas.
 - ⊕ **Non-availability of sufficient funds** for medical research.
 - ⊕ **Non-optimal use** of existing infrastructure.
- **Recommendations**
 - ⊕ **Expansion of Government's existing scheme** for establishment of new medical colleges can help in increasing medical seats.
 - ⊕ Streamlining the recruitment process to **prevent ghost faculty** in medical colleges.
 - ⊕ **Leverage technology for distance learning** and **virtual classrooms** for addressing seat shortage.
 - ⊕ NMC maintain a **real-time national database** of doctors and undertake a **comparative study of best practices of its parallel organisation in various countries**.
 - ⊕ **Chalk out comprehensive India-specific plan** for next 20-25 years and **encourage private investment**.



22nd Law Commission of India (LCI) submits its 286th Report titled "A Comprehensive Review of the Epidemic Diseases Act (EDA), 1897"

- As per 22nd LCI, **existing legislation i.e. EDA 1897 does not comprehensively address the concerns** pertaining to containment and management of future epidemics in country.
- **About EDA, 1897**
 - ⊕ It provides for **prevention of spread of epidemic diseases**. It granted **extensive powers to State Governments to regulate, prevent and control epidemic disease**.
 - ◆ Epidemic Diseases Bill was **introduced in Council of Governor-General of India** in Calcutta by **John Woodburn**.
 - ◆ Colonial government {**Lord Elgin-II (1894 - 1899)**} introduced EDA to **tackle the epidemic of bubonic plague** that had spread in erstwhile Bombay Presidency in 1896.
 - ⊕ In light of violence faced by healthcare workers during COVID-19, **Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Act, 2020** Was enacted which amended EDA, 1897.
- **Limitations of EDA, 1897**
 - ⊕ **Colonial era law** is incapable of handling the changing variants of communicable diseases.
 - ⊕ **Does not define** an 'epidemic' or an 'infectious' disease, and does not differentiate between an 'outbreak', 'epidemic' and 'pandemic'.
 - ⊕ **Lack of decentralization and demarcation** of power between **Centre, State and local authorities**.
 - ⊕ **Lacks stipulated guidelines** that would be **followed during isolation and quarantine**.
 - ⊕ **Makes no mention** for **safe disposal of infectious medical waste** and human corpses.

Recommendations

- **Define terminologies** like Outbreak, epidemic etc. in comprehensive manner.
- **Dedicated Standard Operating Procedure** to respond against epidemic.
- **States should collaborate with Centre** in preparing Epidemic Plan and revise it at regular intervals.
- **Broad framework for imposing lockdown and restrictions** on movement of people and vehicles.

PRS Legislative Research released Vital Stats on Functioning of the 17th Lok Sabha

- The 17th Lok Sabha (LS) held its sessions between June 2019 and February 2024. During this period,
 - ⊖ It held 274 sittings and passed 179 Bills.
 - ⊖ Question Hour functioned for 60% of scheduled time in LS and 52% in Rajya Sabha.
 - ◆ Question hour was cancelled in monsoon session of 2020, due to pandemic.
- Issues arising out of LS functioning:
 - ⊖ Fewest sittings amongst all full-term Lok Sabhas with 206 instances of suspension of Members of Parliament.
 - ◆ Average annual sitting days down to 55 from 135 in the first LS.
 - ⊖ For the first time, LS did not elect Deputy Speaker for entire duration.
 - ◆ Article 93 of Constitution requires that LS elect a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker 'as soon as may be'.
 - ⊖ Only 16% bills referred to committees for detailed scrutiny with passage of majority of bills without recorded voting.
 - ◆ 35% of bills passed with less than an hour of discussion.
 - ⊖ Time spent on budget discussions has reduced with about 80% of the budget voted without discussion.
- Way forward for improving LS functioning
 - ⊖ More frequent sittings of Parliament.
 - ⊖ Detailed scrutiny of bills with adequate discussion and referral to committees.
 - ⊖ Adequate discussion time for Opposition and constructive consultations between parties.

Observations of Black Hole M87* data captured by Event Horizon telescope (EHT) in 2018 show persistent shadow of the black hole

- The 2018 observations revealed a familiar shadow of the same size EHT found in 2017, when it took the first image of a black hole.
- A black hole is an astronomical object with a gravitational pull so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape it.
 - ⊖ Black hole's gravitation pull becomes this strong at the Event Horizon, the boundary from within which a particle cannot escape.
 - ⊖ Event horizon captures any light passing through it, and the distorted space-time around it causes light to be redirected through gravitational lensing.
 - ◆ These two effects produce a dark zone that astronomers refer to as the event horizon shadow.
- Gravitational Lensing occurs when a massive celestial body such as a galaxy cluster causes a sufficient curvature of spacetime for the path of light around it to be visibly bent, as if by a lens.
 - ⊖ The body causing the light to curve is accordingly called a gravitational lens.
 - ⊖ It is an observable example of Einstein's theory of general relativity.
- According to Einstein's theory of general relativity, time and space are fused together in a quantity known as spacetime.
 - ⊖ Massive objects cause spacetime to curve and gravity is simply the curvature of spacetime.
 - ⊖ As light travels through spacetime, the path taken by light will also be curved by an object's mass.

Event Horizon Telescope (EHT)

- It is a network of synchronized radio observatories around the world that combine as a single telescope with an aperture the size of Earth used to observe sources of radio light associated with black holes.
- It links radio telescopes across the globe to create an Earth-sized interferometer using Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI).
- Presently, no Indian radio telescope is part of EHT.

Also in News



Alaskapox

- Alaska health officials have confirmed first death from a recently discovered viral disease – Alaskapox.
- About Alaskapox
 - ⊖ Part of a family of viruses known as orthopoxviruses, several of which are known to infect and cause disease in human.
 - ⊖ Double-stranded-DNA virus comes from same genus as smallpox, and cowpox.
 - ⊖ First identified in an adult in Fairbanks, Alaska in 2015, and primarily occurs in small mammals.
 - ⊖ To date, no human-to-human transmission of Alaskapox virus has been documented.
 - ⊖ Symptoms: One or more skin lesions (bumps or pustules), swollen lymph nodes and joint and/or muscle pain.



Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

- Researchers developed an early warning indicator for the breakdown of the AMOC.
 - ⊖ AMOC has been labeled as one of the tipping elements in the climate system.
- About AMOC
 - ⊖ AMOC is a large system of ocean currents that carry warm water from the tropics northwards into the North Atlantic.
 - ⊖ It is driven by differences in temperature and salt content.
 - ⊖ It is being eroded by faster than expected melt-off of Greenland's glaciers and Arctic ice sheets.
- Implications of AMOC collapse: Rise in Atlantic Sea levels; Flipping of wet and dry seasons in the Amazon; More erratic fluctuations in temperatures; More warmer southern hemisphere.



Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)

- **Absence of a full bench** is affecting functioning of the SAT leading to delays and disruptions.
- **About Securities Appellate Tribunal**
 - ⊕ It is a **statutory body** established under the provisions of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Act, 1992.
 - ⊕ It hears and disposes appeals against orders passed by
 - ◆ SEBI
 - ◆ Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)
 - ◆ Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI)
 - ⊕ The Presiding Officer and Judicial Members are appointed by the **Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India** or his/her nominee while Technical members are appointed on recommendation of a **Search-cum-Selection Committee**.



Resolution Professionals

- A circular by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) directed **Resolution Professionals (RPs)** to share reports on insolvency applications with **both debtors and creditors**.
- ⊕ Under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, RPs are required to submit a **report to the adjudicating authority recommending approval or rejection** of an application for initiating the insolvency resolution process.
- As per the IBC, RP means an **Insolvency Professional (IP)** appointed to conduct the corporate insolvency resolution process.
 - ⊕ Entire insolvency and bankruptcy process is **managed by an IP**, appointed by the adjudicator.



Unani System of Medicine

- **World Unani Day** is celebrated every year on **11th February**, marking birth anniversary of famous **Indian Unani scholar Hakim Ajmal Khan**.
- Unani system of medicine is **one of the oldest** healthcare systems of the world, **originating in Greece (Yūnān)**.
 - ⊕ **Hippocrates** is known as the **father of Unani system**.
 - ⊕ Unani medicine is based on the **'Humoral Theory'**, which presupposes the presence of four Humors - Dam (blood), Balghum (phlegm), Safra (yellow bile) and Sauda (black bile) - in the body.
- It came to India around the **8th century** by the Arabs and is **officially recognized** as one of the AYUSH systems.



Dhokra Shilpkala

- Chhattisgarh's Ocher Studio is helping in preservation of Dhokra Shilpkala.
- **About Dhokra Shilpkala**
 - ⊕ **4000 years old intricate process of metal casting, using lost-wax technique** also known as cire perdue.
 - ⊕ Origins of art can be traced to tribal communities residing in regions of **Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha**.
 - ⊕ Word "Dhokra" is believed to be derived from **Dhokra Damar tribes**, who are **traditional metal smiths of Central India**.
 - ⊕ Art is inspired from nature, mythology, and everyday life.
 - ⊕ **Threat:** Rapid urbanization, diminishing number of skilled artisans and rise of modern materials and technologies.
- **Also, Bastar Dhokra handicraft from Chhattisgarh has already been granted GI Tag.**



Unified Payment Interface (UPI)

- Prime Minister of India jointly inaugurated **UPI services with Mauritius and Sri Lanka** and also **RuPay card services in Mauritius**.
 - ⊕ This will **boost digital transformation**, promote tourism and strengthen bilateral economies ties with both countries.
- **About UPI**
 - ⊕ It powers **multiple bank accounts** into a **single mobile application** (of any participating bank), merging **several banking features** e.g., transfer of funds, etc.
 - ⊕ Developed by **National Payments Corporation of India**, an initiative of RBI and Indian Banks' Association under provisions of **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.



Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) scheme

- C-DOT and IIT-Kharagpur signed an agreement to **develop prototypes for 10-Gigabit-capable symmetric Passive Optical Network (PON)**, Optical Line Terminal (OLT) and Optical Network Unit (ONU).
 - ⊕ This agreement was signed under TTDF scheme.
- **About TTDF Scheme**
 - ⊕ Launched by **Universal Service Obligation Fund, a body under Department of Telecommunications** in 2022.
 - ⊕ Aims to **provide funding support to domestic companies** involved in technology design, development, commercialization of telecommunication products and solutions to **enable affordable broadband and mobile services in rural and remote areas**.



Kawal Tiger Reserve

- Six Forest staff members were suspended for being negligent in controlling **teak smuggling in Kawal Tiger Reserve**.
- **About Kawal Tiger Reserve**
 - ⊕ **Located in Telangana** and in the **southern-most tip of the Central Indian Tiger Landscape**, having linkages with Tadoba-Andhari (Maharashtra) and Indravati (Chhattisgarh) tiger reserves.
 - ⊕ Part of **Deccan peninsula-central highlands** and is nestled in the **Sahyadri Mountain Ranges**.
 - ⊕ It is a major catchment of **Godavari River** and rivulets like **Peddavagu and Kadam**.
 - ⊕ **Vegetation:** Southern Tropical **dry-deciduous**, predominantly **teak and bamboo**.
 - ⊕ **Fauna:** Nilgai, Chinkara, Black buck, Sambar, Spotted deer, Tiger, Leopard etc.