

31 January, 2024

Status Report of Snow Leopards in India

Context: Shri Bhupender Yadav, the Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, unveiled the Status of Snow Leopards in India report at the National Board for Wildlife meeting in New Delhi.

> Key highlights:

- **Scientific Milestone:** SPAI reports a snow leopard population of 718 individuals in India, marking a significant scientific achievement.
- **National Coordinator and Collaborators:** The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) led the SPAI program, with collaboration from snow leopard range states and conservation partners, including the Nature Conservation Foundation and WWF-India.
- **Geographical Coverage:** SPAI systematically covered over 70% of the potential snow leopard range in India, involving forest and wildlife staff, researchers, volunteers, and contributions from knowledge partners.
- **Spatial Distribution Assessment:** Utilizing a meticulous two-step framework, SPAI evaluated snow leopard spatial distribution by incorporating habitat covariates, aligning with guidelines set by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in 2019.
- **Abundance Estimation:** The second step involved estimating snow leopard abundance using camera traps in identified stratified regions, covering approximately 120,000 km² of crucial snow leopard habitat across the trans-Himalayan region.
- **Survey Efforts:** During SPAI, efforts included surveying 13,450 km of trails for recording snow leopard signs and deploying camera traps at 1,971 locations for 180,000 trap nights.
- **Population Estimates by State:** Based on data analysis, the estimated snow leopard population in different states are as follows: Ladakh (477), Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).
- **Improved Understanding of Snow Leopard Range:** Recent status surveys have significantly increased understanding, providing preliminary information for 80% of the range (about 79,745 km²), compared to 56% in 2016.
- **Recommendations for Conservation:** The report emphasizes the need for establishing a dedicated Snow Leopard Cell at WII under the MoEFCC, focusing on long-term population monitoring, supported by well-structured study designs and consistent field surveys.
- **Consistent Monitoring for Long-Term Survival:** States and Union Territories are encouraged to adopt a periodic population estimation approach (every 4th year) in the snow leopard range to ensure consistent monitoring and formulate effective conservation strategies.

> Snow Leopard

- **Name:** Snow Leopard
- **Scientific Name:** *Panthera uncia*
- **Population in India:** Estimated 400-700
- **Conservation Status:**
 - Vulnerable (IUCN)
 - Schedule I (Wildlife Act, 1972 - India)



- **Habitat in India:** Western & Eastern Himalayas.
- **Habitat Preferences:** Steep, rugged terrains, 3,000-5,000m+.
- **Global Status:** CITES Appendix I.

The Indian Economy: A Review

Context: Ahead of the Interim Budget, the Economic Survey will not be brought out by the CEA, a day before it. Instead the CEA has released a report on the economic insights of India.

- Not an Economic Survey due to reasons like not being presented before general elections and potential disruption in the Budget process in 2024.
- Economic Survey typically presented by Finance Minister ahead of Union Budget on February 1 each year.
- **Theme of Indian Economy Review 2024:** Divided into two main chapters, providing insights into India's economic development, challenges, and resilience.
 - **Chapter 1: Indian Economy - Past, Present, and Future**
 - Comprehensive overview of India's economic journey since independence.
 - Focus on different time periods, from initial industrialization to recent global events like the pandemic.
 - Highlights significant reforms and strategies contributing to India's transformative growth.
 - **Chapter 2: What Made the Indian Economy Resilient?**
 - Explores factors contributing to the resilience of the Indian economy, especially in the face of recent global challenges.
 - Examines policy measures, reforms, and initiatives across sectors like finance, manufacturing, digital infrastructure, and public welfare.
- **Summary of Indian Economy Review 2024**
 - **Economic Growth Projections**
 - India's remarkable economic journey over the past decade elevated it to the 5th largest global economy.
 - Projected growth rate at 7% for FY24, likely continuing into FY25.
 - Optimism echoed by global agencies like S&P Global Ratings.
 - **Historical Growth:** 7.2% growth in FY23 and 8.7% in FY22.

Face to Face Centres

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- India became the world's fourth-largest stock market in the world by market capitalisation, overtaking Hong Kong.
- Potential as World's Third-Largest Economy**
 - India poised to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030, targeting a \$7-trillion GDP.
 - Supported by rapid development in public sector infrastructure, financial health, and initiatives like Jan Dhan Yojana.
 - Fifty-one crore bank accounts under Jan Dhan Yojana with total deposits of over ₹2.1 lakh crore.
 - Over 55% of them are women.
 - India is the third-largest fintech economy in the world after the USA and the UK.
- Challenges and Opportunities**
 - Acknowledges challenges such as geopolitical conflicts, supply chain disruptions, and global shifts.
 - Effective management of COVID and balanced approach towards energy transition demonstrate resilience.
 - Global Risks:** Geopolitical conflicts and supply chain disruptions.
 - Technological Progress:** AI and global manufacturing shifts.
 - Energy Transition:** Balancing economic growth and green energy initiatives.
 - Vaccination Impact:** Contributed to quick economic recovery.
 - Oil Supply Management: Notable in maintaining economic stability.
- Future Outlook**
 - Bright future with rising aspirations, a healthier financial sector, and anticipated continuous GDP growth above 7%.
- Aspirations and Confidence: Rising expectations among young Indians.
- All-inclusive Welfare Approach: Expected to contribute to the enlargement of the consumption base.
- GDP Growth Above 7%:** Possible in the coming years, driven by structural reforms and financial sector strength.
- Hyper-globalisation Shift:** Moving away from global manufacturing dependency.
- Artificial Intelligence Impact:** Challenges in service trade and employment.
- Energy Transition:** Balancing economic growth with green energy initiatives.

➤ Economic Survey

- The Economic Survey of India is an annual report released by the Ministry of Finance, typically presented in Parliament a day before the Union Budget.
- It is prepared by the Economics Division of the Department of Economic Affairs under the guidance of the Chief Economic Advisor.
- The survey reviews the developments in the Indian economy over the previous 12 months and presents the economic outlook for the current fiscal year.
- It provides insights into the current state of the Indian economy, offering data on gross domestic product (GDP), inflation, employment, and trade.
- The tradition of presenting the Economic Survey dates back to the year 1950-51.
- Initially, up to 1964, it was presented along with the Union Budget, but from 1964 onwards, it has been delinked from the Budget.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Carbon Markets



Recently, the central government launched a framework to promote voluntary carbon markets in the agriculture sector.

About Carbon Market:

- Carbon markets are **financial systems** where carbon credits are bought and sold.
- These markets **establish a monetary value for carbon emissions**, incentivizing emission reductions by imposing a cost on polluters.
- There are two main types of carbon markets - **Compliance Market**, regulated by government policies and **Voluntary Market**, where entities voluntarily offset their emissions.
- Organizations like the **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)** actively promote carbon market mechanisms to address climate change and facilitate international cooperation.
- Article 6 of the Paris Agreement** allows countries to utilize international carbon markets to meet their **NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions)**.
- The first international carbon market was created in **1997** with the United Nations' Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

C-bot



Recently, the Goa-headquartered National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) has launched a Coral Reef Monitoring and Surveillance Robot, or C-bot, for long-term monitoring of coral reefs.

About C-bot:

- C-Bot is a **coral autonomous underwater vehicle** that monitors coral reefs over long periods of time.
- It is an **advanced robot** with enhanced surveillance capabilities.
- It capable of traveling to a **depth of 200 meters underwater** and can scan the depth of the **Indian Ocean**.
- It will also **help the Navy** in conducting bathymetry studies to help plot navigation channels and scope out **hydrothermal vents**, where geothermally heated water seeps up from deep below the ocean floor.

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Kutia Tribe



Two persons from the Kutia Kondh community have recently attended the Republic Day parade in New Delhi as special guests.

About Kutia Tribe:

- The Kutia Kondh are a **primitive section of the Kondhs tribe**.
- They are a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal (PVTGs)** group in the Kalahandi district of **Odisha**.
- They live in valleys and on hilltops and are dependent on **shifting cultivation**, minor **agriculture** and collecting **non-timber forest products (NTFP)**.
- **Dongar chaas or podu chaas** is a term used by the Kondhs to describe shifting cultivation or slash-and-burn agriculture.
- They are **nature worshippers** and their families are mostly nuclear and patriarchal.
- The Odisha government launched the **Millet Mission initiative in 2017** to recognize the importance of millets to the tribal community.
- Currently, India recognizes **75 tribes** as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

Laughing Gull



Recently, a Laughing Gull, from North America has been spotted for the first time in India at the Chittari estuary in Kasaragod district, Kerala.

About Laughing Gull:

- The laughing Gull (**Leucophaeus atricilla**) is a medium-sized body with long wings gull that lives in North and South America.
- It is commonly found in **coastal regions**, particularly **beaches** and **salt marshes**.
- It is known for its **unique laughter-like calls** and has capability to travel thousands of kilometres from North America to the coastal region of Kerala.
- This bird becomes **active during the day**, but **forages at night during breeding season**.
- It is a **scavenger** and **omnivore**, and its scientific name comes from its laugh-like call.
- It has a **dark upper part, black legs, long drooping bill**, and a dark smudge on the back of the head.
- It has been classified as "**Least Concern**" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Place in News

Bangladesh

Recently, Bangladesh has slipped by two positions in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2023 of Berlin-based Transparency International (TI) to become the 10th most corrupt country in the world.

Bangladesh (Capital: Dhaka)

Location: Bangladesh is a **densely populated, low-lying**, mainly riverine country located in South Asia.

Boundaries: Bangladesh shares its border with **India** (East, West and North), **Myanmar** (Southwest) and the **Bay of Bengal** (South).

Physical Features:

- **Tazing Dong Peak 1**, also known as Bijay, is the highest mountain peak in Bangladesh.
- The **Padma** is a major river of Bangladesh which is the **tributary of the river Ganges**.

Indo-Bangladesh relations:

- Indo-Bangladesh relations have evolved from shared historical ties, notably during the **Partition of India in 1947**.
- India played a crucial role in Bangladesh's independence during the **Liberation War in 1971**, being the first nation to recognize its sovereignty.



POINTS TO PONDER

- In which state is the Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve, recently making headlines? - Arunachal Pradesh
- What type of satellite is INSAT-3DS, recently launched by ISRO? - Meteorological satellite
- The Dogri folk dance, recently in the spotlight, is a renowned folk dance of which state/UT? - Jammu
- According to which article of the Constitution is it stated that "There shall be a Supreme Court of India"? - Article 124
- Which ministry is associated with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), recently featured in the news? - Ministry of Finance

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