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Current affairs summary for prelims

14 October 2024

WWF's Living Planet Report 2024

Context: The World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature has released its Living Planet Report (LPR) 2024, revealing a staggering 73% decline in the average size of monitored wildlife populations globally from 1970 to 2020. This decline, noted in the report released on October 9, 2024, underscores the urgent need for concerted efforts to address the intertwined crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Key Findings of the Report:

Overall Decline:

- The report highlights an increase from the 69% decline recorded in the 2022 edition. The data presented is based on the Living Planet Index (LPI), which includes trends from nearly 35,000 populations of 5,495 species.

Ecosystem-specific Declines:

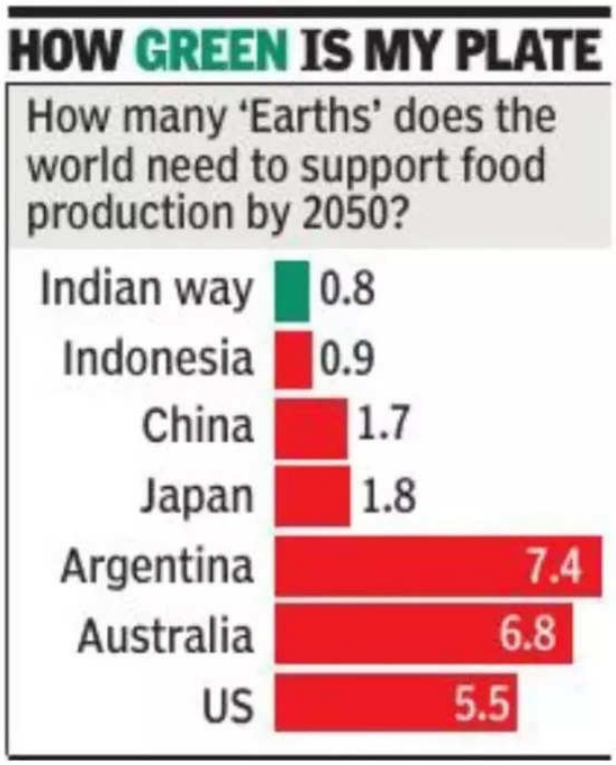
- Freshwater ecosystems: Declined by 85%.
- Terrestrial ecosystems: Declined by 69%.
- Marine ecosystems: Declined by 56%.

Threats to Wildlife:

- Habitat loss and degradation is the most significant threat, primarily driven by unsustainable agricultural practices and food consumption patterns.
- Other threats include over-exploitation, invasive species, and diseases.
- Pollution poses an additional risk, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, which recorded a 60% average decline in wildlife populations.

India-specific Observations:

- The report notes a concerning decline in three vulture species in India:
  - **White-rumped vulture (Gyps bengalensis):** Declined by 67% since 2002.
  - **Indian vulture (Gyps indicus):** Declined by 48%.
  - **Slender-billed vulture (Gyps tenuirostris):** Declined by 89%.
- Despite these declines, certain species in India, such as tigers, have shown recovery due to proactive conservation efforts. The All-India Tiger Estimation 2022 recorded a minimum of 3,682 tigers, up from 2,967 in 2018.



Implications of Wildlife Declines:

- The declining wildlife populations serve as critical indicators of ecosystem health and potential extinction risks. Damaged ecosystems are more susceptible to tipping points, which can lead to irreversible changes and threaten the planet's life-support systems.
- The report emphasizes that the ongoing nature loss and climate change crises could destabilize societies and endanger human livelihoods.

Global Commitments and Future Actions:

- Countries have set ambitious global goals to reverse nature loss through the Global Biodiversity Framework, cap temperature rise to 1.5°C under the Paris Agreement, and work towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- However, the report stresses that current national commitments and actions are inadequate to meet the targets set for 2030.

Nobel Prize in Literature (2024)

Context: The Nobel Prize in Literature 2024 was

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awarded to South Korean author Han Kang for her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life. She is the first South Korean writer to receive this prestigious award.

Literary Career of Han Kang:

- Han Kang's writing journey began with poetry in 1993, establishing her as a significant voice in South Korean literature.
- She published her first collection of short stories, Love of Yeosu, in 1995.
- Her groundbreaking novel, The Vegetarian (2007), garnered international acclaim and brought her work to a global audience.

Major Works:

- **The Vegetarian (2007):** Explores the profound consequences of a woman's decision to stop eating meat, challenging societal norms and expectations through the reactions of her family.
- **Human Acts (2014):** Set against the backdrop of the 1980 Gwangju Uprising, it examines the event through various perspectives, reflecting on themes of violence, trauma, and resilience.
- **The White Book (2016):** A meditation on life, death, and the color white, blending personal reflection with philosophical inquiry.

Literary Style and Themes:

- Combines lyricism with simplicity, allowing complex emotions to resonate deeply.
- Central themes include historical and personal traumas, presented with nuance and sensitivity.
- Highlights women's experiences and societal expectations, providing critical insights into gender dynamics.
- Probes the human condition, questioning the meaning and purpose of life.

Awards and Recognition:

- **Man Booker International Prize (2016):** Awarded for The Vegetarian, marking her significance in international literature.
- **Prix Femina Étranger (2017):** Awarded for Human Acts, solidifying her reputation as a powerful storyteller.

Recent Nobel Laureates in Literature:

- **2023:** Jon Fosse was awarded for his innovative plays and prose which "give voice to the unsayable."
- **2022:** Annie Ernaux was recognized for her courage and clinical acuity in exploring personal memory and societal changes.
- **2021:** Abdulrazak Gurnah received the award for his compassionate exploration of colonialism and the refugee experience.
- **2020:** Louise Glück was honored for her unmistakable poetic voice that universalizes individual existence.

About the Nobel Prize in Literature:

- Awarded each year to authors whose works embody idealism and explore the human condition.
- The first recipient was Sully Prudhomme in 1901 for his poetic contributions.

Caracal Breeding and Conservation Centre in Kutch

- The Gujarat government has taken a significant step towards wildlife conservation by announcing the establishment of a Caracal Breeding and Conservation Centre in Kutch. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel unveiled this initiative during the Wildlife Week celebrations at the Shyamji Krishna Varma Memorial in Mandvi, emphasizing the importance of protecting endangered species and their habitats.
- The centre will be located in the Chadva Rakhal region of Kutch, an area recognized for its rich biodiversity. The government has allocated a budget of 10 crore for the establishment and ongoing operation of this important

facility.

- Its primary focus will be on the protection and breeding of the critically endangered Caracal (Henotaro) species. In India, Caracals are listed under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Act, indicating their vulnerable status. While they are classified as 'least concern' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to larger populations in Africa.

- Currently, only 19 sightings of Caracals have been reported in Gujarat, all within the Kutch district. Of these, only nine have been verified through photographs. Caracals are nocturnal animals known for their agility, distinctive ear tufts, and hunting prowess. They typically inhabit dry, arid regions and moist woodlands, often living in small herds. However, habitat loss poses a significant threat to their survival in India, making conservation efforts crucial.
- The Chadva Rakhal region is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including leopards, crocodiles, Indian gazelle, desert foxes, jackals, and numerous bird species. It boasts 28 species of mammals, 28 species of reptiles, and 243 species of plants, highlighting its ecological significance.

China's 'Anaconda Strategy' Against Taiwan

- Taiwan's navy commander, Admiral Tang Hua, has revealed that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is intensifying its military presence around Taiwan, employing a tactic known as the 'anaconda strategy.'
- This multifaceted approach includes military, psychological, and cyber tactics designed to exert pressure on Taiwan, drawing inspiration from the historical Anaconda Plan of the American Civil War, which aimed to economically suffocate its enemy.
- The PLA is prepared to blockade Taiwan at any moment, posing a significant military threat. Recent statistics show a dramatic increase in Chinese military activities: the number of ships operating near Taiwan surged from 142 in January to 282 by August, while air incursions jumped from 36 to 193 in the same timeframe.
- This strategy not only seeks to exhaust Taiwan's defenses but also employs psychological tactics to create fear and uncertainty, potentially leading Taiwan to make costly mistakes. Political scientist June Teufel Dreyer notes that the anaconda strategy aims to destabilize Taiwanese society while maintaining external pressure.
- Ultimately, China seeks to weaken Taiwan's defenses and assert its dominance over the island, reflecting broader regional ambitions without resorting to immediate military confrontation.

Nobel Peace Prize 2024

Context: The 2024 Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to Nihon Hidankyo, a Japanese NGO, for its advocacy for a world free of nuclear weapons. The award was announced by the Norwegian Nobel Committee on October 11, 2024.

Contributions of NGO which was recognised by Nobel Committee:

Role in Raising Awareness:

- Plays a critical role in promoting peace and advocating for nuclear disarmament
- Highlights the catastrophic consequences of nuclear warfare on a global scale

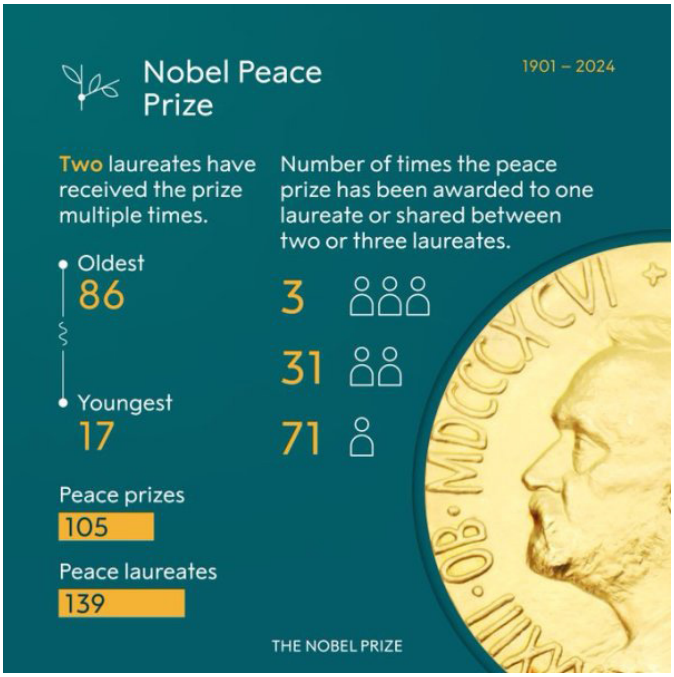
Core Mission:

- Focuses on documenting the experiences of Hibakusha as powerful witnesses to the horrors of atomic bombings. Provides thousands of witness accounts that emphasize the need for disarmament.

Public Advocacy:

- Engages in public advocacy through resolutions and public appeals
- Articulates the urgent need for nuclear disarmament to shape public opinion and influence policymakers.

- International Engagement:
- Sends annual delegations to the United Nations and various peace conferences
- Advocates for policies promoting nuclear disarmament on the global stage



Impact on Global Discourse:

- Mobilizes support for disarmament and fosters dialogue among nations.
- Ensures the voices of atomic bomb survivors are heard in international discussions.

About Nihon Hidankyo:

- Nihon Hidankyo is a prominent Japanese NGO.
- Founded by atomic bomb survivors (Hibakusha) after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945
- Represents the collective voice of those impacted by nuclear weapons

Significance of the Award:

- The committee emphasized the importance of maintaining the "nuclear taboo" amidst ongoing global conflicts, underscoring that nuclear weapons are the most destructive weapons ever created.
- This award highlights the critical discourse surrounding nuclear disarmament and emphasizes the collective responsibility to prevent the use of such catastrophic weapons.

Previous Recipient:

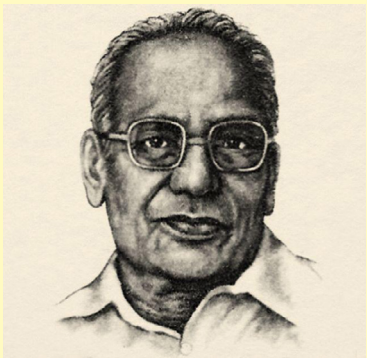
- In 2023, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi for her courageous fight against the oppression of women and her advocacy for human rights.

Formal Presentation:

- The Nobel Peace Prize will be formally presented to Nihon Hidankyo on December 10, 2024, in Oslo, Norway, marking a significant moment in the global struggle for nuclear disarmament.
- welfare schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Person in News

Jayaprakash Narayan



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 11, 2024, paid tributes to socialist stalwart and anti-Emergency movement icon Jayaprakash Narayan on his birth anniversary.
- Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as Lok Nayak, was born on October 11, 1902, in Sitab Diara, Bihar. He played a key role in India's freedom movement, initially inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and later by socialist ideas.
- He left his studies to join the Non-Cooperation Movement and, after studying in the U.S., became active in the Indian National Congress. During the Quit India Movement, he led the underground resistance and escaped from Hazaribagh Jail in 1942.
- In 1974, JP led a student movement in Bihar against corruption and called for a "Total Revolution," advocating for socio-political reform.
- His leadership during the anti-Emergency movement in the 1970s culminated in the

defeat of Indira Gandhi's government in 1977, making him a symbol of resistance and democracy.

- A fierce advocate for democracy, JP's legacy continues to inspire political reform and social justice in India. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1999.

Nanaji Deshmukh

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Bharat Ratna Nanaji Deshmukh on his birth anniversary.
- Nanaji Deshmukh was born on October 11, 1916. A social reformer and politician from India, he worked in the fields of education, health, and rural self-reliance.
- Deshmukh was a prominent social activist and politician, deeply associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) from a young age.
- He played a key role in the anti-Emergency movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1974. As the general secretary of the Lok Sangharsh Samiti, he supported Narayan's call for "Total Revolution."
- Deshmukh was instrumental in establishing Saraswati Shishu Mandir, India's first rural university, Chitrakoot Gramodya Vishwavidyalaya, and Deendayal Research Institute (DRI).
- After retiring from active politics in 1980, he focused on rural development in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, promoting self-reliance, rural education, and health.
- Deshmukh was also an active participant in Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement, working towards land redistribution and social reform.

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