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24th, January, 2023

Today's Topics Covered

1) Shimla Municipal Corporation wards have been reduced from 41 to 34 by the Himachal Government.....
Read in detail

2) Deputy CM discussed in Irrigation Project.....Read in detail

3) Artificial Intelligence, machine learning R&D pact between IIT Mandi and IAF HQ maintenance command.....Read in Detail

4) Marks of tigers, spotted in Paonta Sahib; forest officer welcome sign.....Read in detail



Topic: Shimla Municipal Corporation wards have been reduced from 41 to 34 by the Himachal Government.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: Indian polity and governance – Constitution, political system, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Importance for Mains Exam:

- PAPER-V: GENERAL STUDIES-II: Unit II: Topic: Local self-government in urban and rural areas in India.

What is the news?

- Shimla Municipal Corporation's wards have been reduced from 41 to 34 by the Congress government.
- The previous BJP government increased the number of wards from 34 to 41 a few months before the last MC House's term expired in June 2022.



How did the government reduce?

- Through an Ordinance, the government has reduced the number to 34.

What did they say in the Ordinance?

- “In section 6 of the Himachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, in clause (a), in the proviso, the words “forty one” shall be substituted for the words “thirty four,” the Ordinance stated.
- In the wake of the Ordinance, not only the number of wards has been reverted to 34 but the delimitation of all affected wards will also stand null and void.

Challenge ahead:

- In the aftermath of this decision, the State Election

Commission (SEC), which conducts the MC polls, will have to decide on its next course of action.

- It had prepared voter lists in 36 wards where there was no delimitation dispute. The process of preparing voter lists was currently underway in the remaining six wards. Furthermore, the State Election Commission had petitioned the Supreme Court to conduct the elections.



Conclusion:

- In the wake of the Ordinance, not only the number of wards has been reverted to 34 but the delimitation of all affected wards will also stand null and void.
- The elections to the MC were due in last June, but the polls could not be held as two councillors moved court challenging the delimitation of Nabha and Summer hill wards.

(Source: The Tribune)

Topic: Deputy CM discussed in Irrigation Project.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: Himachal Current Events.

Importance for Mains Exam:

- PAPER-V: GENERAL STUDIES-II: Unit II: Topic: Institutional framework, Policies and Interventions for development in various sectors.

What is the news?

- Deputy Chief Minister, Mukesh Agnihotri who also holds the Jal Shakti portfolio, called on Kushvinder Vohra, Chairman, Central Water Commission (CWC) at New Delhi today and held thorough discussions for strengthening the irrigation sector in the state besides requesting for liberal assistance for the same.



Projects discussed:

Phina Singh medium Irrigation Project in Nurpur:

- Phina Singh medium Irrigation Project in Nurpur in district Kangra was started at an initial cost of Rs 204 crore in 2011, which has now escalated to Rs 646 crore. The State has spent Rs 283 crore from its own resources so far for executing the project. Sh. Agnihotri requested for releasing Rs 350 crore at the earliest so that this project can be completed on priority. He added that this project is on the priority list of the Union government as well.

Shah Nehar project:

- 5000 hectares of area to be covered under the Shah Nehar project was not getting adequate water for irrigation and the State has requested for additional resources

from the Centre to provide irrigation facilities.

Beet Area Irrigation Scheme:

- Sh. Agnihotri also requested for providing speedy approval for the Beet Area Irrigation Scheme, Phase-II in Una district to be completed with an outlay of Rs 75 crore. The Deputy Chief Minister informed that Phase -1 of this project had been completed by the state from its own resources.
- ***Nadaun irrigation scheme*** will be completed in a time-bound manner within the next two to three months.

Sukhahar and Jwalaji irrigation schemes:

- These were also discussed during the meeting and it was apprised that funds were not being received for the channelization works of rivulets.

(Source: HP Government)



Topic: Artificial Intelligence, machine Learning R&D pact between IIT Mandi and IAF HQ maintenance command.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: Himachal Current Events.

Importance for Mains Exam:

- **PAPER-VI: GENERAL STUDIES-III: Topic: Science and Technology.**

What is the news?

- On Monday, the Indian Institute of Technology in Mandi signed an agreement with the Indian Air Force's Headquarters Maintenance Command in Nagpur to collaborate on artificial intelligence and machine learning research and development.



What is the scope of this agreement?

- According to the agreement, IIT, Mandi, and HQ MC will

work together on research projects, technology development, and skill development in artificial intelligence, machine learning, human-computer interaction, and decision support systems.

How will this be beneficial?

- According to an IIT statement, the MoU will allow for activities such as mutual visits by officers of Maintenance Command and IIT Mandi faculty for discussion on collaborative projects, as well as joint brainstorming sessions and workshops.
- The collaboration will also facilitate the technology development and will look into plans to scale up the prototypes and technologies coming out of the collaboration for fabrication by mutually identified industry partners.

(News Source: economic times)

Topic: Marks of tigers, spotted in Paonta Sahib; forest officer welcome sign.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: Himachal Current Events.

Importance for Mains Exam:

- **PAPER-VI: GENERAL STUDIES-III: Topic: Wild Life Protection.**

What is the news?

- The discovery of tiger pugmarks on the outskirts of Simbalbara National Park, which supports dense Sal forests with grassy landscapes and diverse wildlife and bird species, has encouraged wildlife experts and enthusiasts who say the 27.88-square-kilometer park supports healthy herbivore prey species.



What does the evidence show?

- According to records, tigers and elephants visit the Simbalbara National Park in the Paonta Valley of Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour district, which is located in the Shivalik hills and adjacent to Haryana's Kalesar National Park.

According to the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI):

- The Simbalbara National Park is Himachal Pradesh's only

conservation area where tiger and elephant sightings have been reported.

- Tiger pugmarks and scats were seen twice during a ZSI faunal survey in 2005 and 2006. One scat sample was pure soil with plenty of undigested ants, while another was digested bones in the form of powdery calcareous substance with plenty of undigested hairs.
- Although Simbalbara has a good prey base for large carnivores, its smaller size makes it unsuitable for a tiger to live there permanently, according to the ZSI.
- Last year, an elephant herd was spotted:
- In November last, a herd of elephants was spotted in Simbalbara National Park, which is now renamed as Sher Jung National Park.
- On the habitat of the elephants, the ZSI says since grass is the major food item for elephants, the smaller size and deciduous vegetation of Simbalbara, without much grassland, cannot sustain an elephant herd for a longer period. Hence the park is not an attractive habitat for the elephant.



Officer shared:

- In the tiger's presence in Simbalbara, the officer said the water flow in the Yamuna river is minimized during winter and there "is possibility that it reached up to Simbalbara from the Rajaji National Park in neighbouring

Uttarakhand”.

- Wildlife experts are encouraged by the discovery of a tiger’s pugmark and say it’s good to know that a tiger can reach Simbalbara. They claim that the proximity of Rajaji-Kalesar-Simbalbara makes the landscape extremely valuable and worthy of preservation.

About Simbalbara National Park:

- It is situated along the Himachal Pradesh-Haryana border in the Paonta Sahib Valley of Sirmour District. Col. Sher Jung National Park is another name for it.
- Simbalbara, which was once the hunting grounds of the Maharaja of Sirmour, is home to the sambhar, spotted deer (cheetal), barking deer, wild boar, blue bull, and a variety of other prey mammals.
- The park is bordered by the Darpur, Majra, and Nagli reserve forests, which have seasonal and perennial streams.
- In terms of tiger movement, a wildlife expert told IANS that the national parks of Simbalbara and Kalesar are linked, but not Rajaji.
- The nearest place which has a tiger population is the western part of the Rajaji reserve. The western part is crowded with human habitations with crisscrossing of road and rail networks.
- And the chances of a tiger sauntering from Rajaji to Simbalbara, covering habitations are largely impossible, he says.
- The Rajaji Tiger Reserves’ east side has the majority of the tiger population, while the western side has only one or two tigers. A national highway and a rail line separate the western and eastern sides of Rajaji.
- The discovery of tiger pugmarks in Himachal Pradesh is significant because the National Tiger Conservation Authority intends to reintroduce tigers from the eastern landscape to the western part of Rajaji.

- Simbalbara National Park, Kalesar National Park, and Rajaji National Park were previously well-connected tiger corridors.
- According to a wildlife expert, the reintroduction of tigers in the western part of Rajaji Park could allow tigers to move across three states' landscapes.
- Forest officials believe all three states will jointly support better conservation of their protected areas.
- The Simbalbara National Park, located along the Nahan-Ponta Sahib road, is some six km from Puruwala. Ponta Sahib is about 18 km from the national park that has been named after Sher Jung, a freedom fighter and hunter-turned-conservationist.

About Zoological Survey of India (ZSI):

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) was established on 1st July, 1916 to promote the survey, exploration and research leading to the advancement in our knowledge of various aspects of exceptionally rich life of the erstwhile ' British Indian Empire '
- The survey has its genesis in the establishment of the Zoological Section of the Indian Museum at Calcutta in 1875.
- By gradually strengthening its staff and expanding its research program, the Survey has met the challenge of the past and is on its way to meet the demands of the future. It has maintained its primary objectives unchanged from its inception.
- Initially, the Survey acquired the Zoological collections of more than a century old from the former Museum (1814-1875) of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and Zoological Section of the Indian Museum(1875-1916) in Calcutta.
- With the increasing interest in the life sciences and with the advent of the country's Five Year Plans, the

expansion program of the survey was initiated. The Survey has established so far 16 Regional and Field Stations, and has developed into a major National Institution.

- It functions as the guardian of the National Zoological Collections, containing over a million identified specimens from all animal groups ranging from Protozoa to Mammals. Extensive and intensive field explorations are undertaken by the Survey in different parts of the country for the studies of fauna, systematic zoology, animal ecology, wildlife and zoogeography, animal behavior, animal population and also marine fauna and the results of the explorations and research are published in its own journals as well as National and International periodicals of repute regularly.
- Recently, efforts have been made towards an integrated approach to zoological investigations, so as to have more purpose oriented research comprising biological, cytotaxonomic, and ecological aspects. However, taxonomy continues to occupy a prominent role.
- There is an increasing interest in matters pertaining to animal life on the part of the public, and a constant stream of inquiries continue to pour in, reflecting public confidence in the Institute. The department has never lacked a constant succession of distinguished Zoologists.

(News Source: daijiworld)



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