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3rd, February, 2023

Today's Topics Covered

- 1) Himachal's Transport Department is the first in the country to transition to electric vehicles.....Read in detail
- 2) The Pong Dam wildlife century has attracted over 1.17 lakh migratory birds.....Read in detail
- 3) Expert says 35% of wetlands have been lost in the last 50 years.....Read in detail



Topic: Himachal's Transport Department is the first in the country to transition to electric vehicles.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: General issues on environmental

ecology, bio-diversity and Climate Change – that do not require subject specialization and General science

Importance for Mains Exam:

- *PAPER-VI: GENERAL STUDIES-III : UNIT II: Topic: Issues, concerns, policies, programmes, conventions, treaties and missions aimed at environment protection, and dealing with the problem of climate change.*

What is the news?

- The Himachal Pradesh State Transport Department has achieved the distinction of being the first such department in the country to switch over to electrical vehicles by electrifying its entire fleet of official vehicles. Taking the 'Go Green' approach, the transport directorate has replaced official petrol and diesel vehicles with electric vehicles.



While congratulating the State Transport Department, Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said:

- Himachal Pradesh has taken the lead in transitioning to electric vehicles and has announced its policy, while other states are nearing the end of the process.

Purpose to start these e-vehicles:

- The motive to start these e-vehicles was to curtail the unnecessary expenditure on petroleum products besides preserving the pristine environment of the State. All the Government departments will be equipped with electrical vehicles within a year, stated the Chief Minister, adding that Electric Vehicle Policy 2022 has also been notified.
- The Chief Minister said that we working in the direction to make Himachal as India's first 'Green Energy State' by 2025.

Current Data:

- At present, about 33 crore vehicles are registered in the country and about 21 lakh vehicles are registered in Himachal Pradesh. According to government data, the country's dependence on crude oil imports has increased from 82.9 percent to 83.7 percent. These figures are showing that India is spending a huge amount on petroleum. In such a situation, the use of electric vehicle will help in reducing this dependence.
- The HRTC was in loss since from last few years. Switching over to electrical vehicles will be a step forward to minimize the cost of transportation and will be affordable to the all.

(News Source: HP Government)

Topic: The Pong Dam wildlife century has attracted over 1.17 lakh migratory birds.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: General issues on environmental ecology, bio-diversity and Climate Change – that do not require subject specialization and General science

Importance for Mains Exam:

- *PAPER-VI: GENERAL STUDIES-III : UNIT II: Topic: State Biodiversity strategy and Action Plan. Endangered and threatened species of Himachal Pradesh. Factors responsible for Bio diversity decline in Himachal Pradesh.*

What is the news?

- This year, over 1.17 lakh migratory birds visited the Pong Dam wildlife century in Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh, up from 7,000 last year.
- The figures were received on January 31 following a two-day count, according to the Chief Conservator of Forest (wildlife).



Important:

- Long Tail Duck was spotted for the first time in this Ramsar site by the teams.
- Northern Pintail numbers have increased from 4,500 last year to 15,700 this year.
- This year has also seen an increase in the number of Bar Headed geese.
- In the coming days, the lake may see more avian visitors as these Siberian birds return from south India and stop at the Pong Dam reservoirs.

Why has the number of birds at the site increased?

- The reason for the increase in the number of birds at the site is that the birds have plenty of food here, and they feel safer now that there hasn't been a single poaching incident reported in a year.

Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh:

- It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1983 and is now a Ramsar site. Pong Dam Sanctuary is also designated as a national wetland. It was formed in 1975 as a result of the construction of a dam across the Beas River.
- It is home to approximately 220 bird species from 54 families. During the winter, migratory birds from all over the Hindukush Himalayas and as far north as Siberia visit.
- The sanctuary area is covered in tropical and subtropical forests, which provide habitat for a large number of Indian Wildlife animals.
- Beas River and its numerous perennial tributaries such as Gaj, Neogal, Binwa, Uhl, Bangana, and Baner feed the lake.
- The lake harbours around 22 species of fish, including rare fish like sal and gad.

A brief note on Pong Dam:

- A reservoir has been constructed on the river Beas in the wet land of Shivalik hills of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, which has been named as Maharana Pratap Sagar.
- It is also known as Pong reservoir or Pong Dam. This dam was built in 1975 named in honor of Maharana Pratap
- The reservoir stretches to an area of 24,529 hectares (60,610 acres), and part of the lakes is 15,662 hectares (38,700 acres).
- Pong reservoir is the most important fish reservoir in the foothills of the Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh.

About Ramsar Sites:

- Ramsar Sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. The Convention was signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971 and has since been ratified by over 170 countries, making it one of the oldest and most successful intergovernmental agreements.
- A wetland can be designated as a Ramsar Site if it meets at least one of the criteria outlined by the Convention, such as supporting threatened species of plants or animals, serving as a key habitat for migratory waterbirds, or providing important ecosystem services such as water purification, flood control, and carbon sequestration.
- Ramsar Sites are recognized for their ecological, biological, cultural, and socio-economic values, and are protected and managed in a sustainable manner to ensure their conservation and wise use. There are over 2,400 Ramsar Sites across the world, covering over 250 million hectares.

(News Source: The Tribune)



Topic: Expert says 35% of wetlands have

been lost in the last 50 years.

Importance: Himachal HPAS Prelims and Mains

Importance for Prelims: General issues on environmental ecology, bio-diversity and Climate Change – that do not require subject specialization and General science

Importance for Mains Exam:

PAPER-VI: GENERAL STUDIES-III : UNIT II: Topic: State Biodiversity strategy and Action Plan. Endangered and threatened species of Himachal Pradesh. Factors responsible for Bio diversity decline in Himachal Pradesh.

What is the news?

- The High Altitude Western Himalayan Regional Centre of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Solan, celebrated World Wetlands Day today in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Science, Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni.
- Dr Kumar Ambrish, in charge of BSI Solan, stated that wetland ecosystems were rapidly deteriorating during his presentation on the theme It's Time for Wetland Restoration.
- In the last 50 years, approximately 35% of natural wetlands have been lost. To preserve these valuable ecosystems, youth must raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and their restoration.



- Dr Satish Kumar Bhardwaj, Professor and Head of the Department of Environmental Science at Nauni University, advocated for the creation of eco-literacy in order to conserve this important ecosystem and generate local action. He stated that wetlands exist in every corner of the globe and serve as the landscape's arteries and veins.
- "Wetlands provide critical ecosystems and biodiversity. Almost 90% of the world's wetlands have been degraded or destroyed. Wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests. As a result, there is an urgent need to increase global awareness of wetlands in order to halt and reverse their loss and degradation."
- "In our state, the conservation of wetlands can be an excellent source of livelihood by promoting ecotourism and the government has taken a good initiative in this direction," he said.

Initiative taked to spread awareness:

- To raise awareness for wetland conservation, students

competed in an essay writing contest. Bhavya Thapa, PhD 2nd year student, won first prize in the essay writing competition, with Muskaan Negi, PhD 3rd Year, Priyanka Balan, PhD 2nd year, and Jalaj Pandit, MSc 1st year student taking second, third, and consolation prizes, respectively.

- The participants took a pledge to spread awareness about wetlands and work collectively for conservation and restoration of wetlands. Around 30 participants including staff of BSI, faculty, students of the Department of Environmental Science and members of SPACE club participated in the event.

About High Altitude Western Himalayan Regional Centre of Botanical Survey of India (BSI):

- The high altitude regions of Western Himalaya required an intensive floral exploration as this region has a rich diversity of many EET and medicinal plant species.
- It was very difficult to adequately explore this area due to long distance from the Headquarters of Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata and from the BSI, Northern Regional Center, Dehradun.
- In view of such difficulties, a new BSI regional center named as High Altitude Regional Center was proposed to setup at Solan to carry out intensive and extensive field surveys to explore and document the floristic diversity of Western Himalayan states viz. Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The remote and difficult areas like Kashmir valley, Ladakh, Pir Panjal, Lahul & Spiti ranges are easily accessible to document the floristic diversity.
- The High Altitude Regional Centre of the Botanical Survey of India was established on 10th December, 2019, with Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh under its jurisdiction with an area of more than 200000 Sq.

Kms. The remote regions of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh (Kinaour, Chamba, Lahul Spiti, Kullu, Shimla-Dodra Kwar, Mandi-hikari devi, Barot, Janjayali and Karsog valleys) fall under cold desert area of the Western Himalaya and are easily accessible from this center. Director of the BSI Dr. A.A. Mao initially appointed Dr Kumar Ambrish, Scientist- E as the 1st Scientist In-charge and Dr. Kuldip S. Dogra, Scientist-D at this centre to run the office and also for future planning of research activities in the High Altitude Western Himalayan Regional Centre.

- Initially the temporary campus was setup at the Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni. The University has leased the 6.6 acres of land for 99 years to Botanical Survey of India near Kalaghat village to develop campus of HAWHRC office building (research labs, seminar and audio, visual hall), residential complex and experimental botanic garden.

(News Source: The Tribune)



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