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THE HINDU

From the brink to a comeback, hope for India's wildlife

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- During **Wildlife Week (October 2–8)**, recent **species-recovery efforts highlight how habitat restoration, scientific monitoring and community participation** can help threatened species recover.

Wildlife Week is observed across India from October 2–8 every year, organised by the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and State Forest Departments to promote wildlife conservation and public awareness.

Key Highlights

Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH) supports recovery of 24 identified species and their habitats.

Integrated Development of Wildlife

Habitats (IDWH): A Centrally Sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) that supports wildlife conservation, habitat improvement, protection and recovery of identified species, along with community participation.

- India launched its **National Red List Roadmap in 2025**, aiming to prepare National Red Data Books for plants and animals by 2030.
- India has **2.4% of global land area but supports nearly 8% of global flora and 7.5% of fauna**.
- Of 7,516 Indian animal species assessed by IUCN**, 1,012 are threatened.
- India's first dugong conservation reserve** covers 448.34 sq km in Palk Bay.
- India's first scientific snow leopard assessment (2024)** estimated 718 individuals.
- Asiatic lion population increased from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025**.
- Madhya Pradesh recorded 12,981 vultures in 2025**, compared with 8,397 in 2019.
- Community participation is central to conservation efforts** involving dugongs, snow leopards, rhinos and other species.

Implications

- Conservation programmes can reverse population declines**, but require sustained, long-term efforts.



- **Habitat loss, fragmentation and infrastructure continue to endanger** vulnerable species.
- **Only 7.2% of India's documented animal species have been assessed** under the IUCN Red List.
- **Limited funds and trained personnel can weaken monitoring** and recovery programmes.
- **Local involvement supports conservation, but livelihood concerns and human–wildlife conflict** remain challenges.

Way Forward

- **Complete the National Red List Assessment** to identify species at greatest risk.
- **Ensure sustained funding for habitat restoration**, monitoring and conservation breeding.
- **Strengthen scientific capacity and training** of forest departments.
- **Ensure meaningful community participation** in conservation planning and implementation.
- **Integrate wildlife conservation with land-use, infrastructure** planning and inter-State coordination.

Mains Question

Species recovery in India requires more than protection of individual animals. Discuss the role of habitat restoration, scientific monitoring and community participation in achieving long-term wildlife conservation. (15 marks, 250 words)

India's stakes in the Global Pandemic Agreement

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in Focus?

- At the **UN High-Level Meeting (UN HLM)**, September 2026, India supported

the **Political Declaration on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR)** and emphasised the need to balance global solidarity, equitable access and national sovereignty.

Key Highlights

- The **WHO Pandemic Agreement (PA)** was adopted in 2025 by 124 Member States, including India.
- The **Agreement seeks to create a global framework for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.**
- Its **implementation is pending negotiations on the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) annex.**
- **PABS aims to ensure that countries providing pathogen samples receive a fair share of vaccines, medicines and therapeutics** developed from them.
- India **stressed equitable access to vaccines, medicines and therapeutics and the creation of global public goods** such as digital health infrastructure.
- India also **emphasised national sovereignty and the right of countries to design policies** according to their circumstances.
- **Key areas include One Health, disease surveillance, health-workforce strengthening and technology transfer.**

Implications

- **Unequal access to vaccines and technologies** could reproduce COVID-19-era inequalities.
- Countries **may resist binding international commitments that constrain national decision-making.**
- **Developing countries may struggle to implement One Health** and surveillance commitments without adequate funding.
- **Restrictions on technology transfer and intellectual property can limit manufacturing capacity** in developing countries.
- **Disagreement over access to pathogens and benefit-sharing could delay full operationalisation** of the Agreement.



Way Forward

- Finalise the PABS mechanism with equitable benefit-sharing provisions.
- Strengthen South–South cooperation in vaccines, diagnostics, digital health and surveillance.
- Ensure technology transfer and sustainable financing for developing countries.
- Strengthen India's domestic One Health, surveillance and health-manufacturing capacity.
- Use platforms such as the G20 and Partners for Multilateralism to promote inclusive global health governance.

Mains Question

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed major inequalities in global health governance. Discuss how India can contribute to building an equitable and sovereignty-sensitive global framework for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. (15 marks, 250 words)

India's cement footprint stands in its way to net-zero emissions

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 3

Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Why in Focus?

- India aims to become a developed country by **2047** and achieve **net-zero emissions by 2070**. Decarbonising the construction sector, especially the **cement industry**, is therefore important for achieving both goals.

Net-zero emissions means releasing only as much greenhouse gas as can be removed from the atmosphere, so there is no overall increase in emissions.

Key Highlights

- The construction sector contributes around

35-40% of global greenhouse gas emissions, mainly because of materials such as **cement and steel**.

- Cement is particularly important because it is a **hard-to-abate sector**. Apart from the energy used in production, **calcination** (the process of heating limestone at high temperatures) **of limestone itself releases carbon dioxide**. Cement contributes around **7-11% of global emissions**.
- Cement production requires limestone to be heated to about **1,450°C**. Around **35-40% of cement-making emissions come from this heating**, while the remaining emissions largely arise from the chemical breakdown of limestone.
- India currently emits around **0.62 tonnes of CO₂ for every tonne of cement produced**. The target is to reduce this to **0.56 tonnes by 2030** and **0.51 tonnes by 2047**.
- At the same time, cement demand is expected to rise sharply. Production could increase from **334 million tonnes in 2019-20 to 1,546 million tonnes by 2070**, due to growing infrastructure and housing needs.
- One major solution is to reduce the use of **clinker**, the most carbon-intensive component of cement. Replacing clinker with materials such as **fly ash and industrial slag** can significantly reduce emissions.
- Other approaches include using **renewable energy, electrification and Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF)** in cement kilns. Traditional materials such as **lime, earth, bamboo and wood** can also be used where they are technically suitable.

RDF is a fuel made from **combustible materials** recovered from municipal solid waste, such as plastics, paper and other dry waste, which can be used in industrial kilns instead of coal

Implications

- Cement cannot be completely decarbonised through renewable energy because **calcination itself produces carbon dioxide**. This makes **Carbon Capture** important for achieving net-zero emissions.
- Cement production also creates environmental damage beyond the factory. **Limestone mining**



can lead to forest clearance, soil removal and loss of vegetation, while transportation adds further emissions.

- Cement is deeply integrated into the construction sector because it is **cheap, easily available, fast-setting and widely understood**. This makes replacing it at a large scale difficult.
- Greater use of alternative materials also has limits. Excessive replacement of clinker may affect **building strength and structural safety**, depending on the application.
- Traditional construction methods cannot be applied everywhere. Their suitability depends on **local climate, geography, building type and safety requirements**.

Way Forward

- Increase the use of **green cement** by reducing the clinker content and using suitable materials such as **fly ash and industrial slag**.
- Shift cement production towards **renewable energy, electrification and RDF** while improving municipal waste segregation.
- Develop and scale up **Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS)** to deal with emissions that cannot be eliminated through cleaner energy.
- Use **government procurement** to create demand for low-carbon cement and encourage builders to adopt greener construction materials.
- Promote **region-specific and climate-responsive construction**, combining modern engineering with suitable traditional materials such as lime, earth, bamboo and other natural systems.

Mains Question

Q. India's growing infrastructure needs make cement indispensable, but its production poses a major challenge to India's net-zero target. Discuss the challenges of decarbonising the cement sector and suggest suitable measures for promoting low-carbon construction in India. (15 marks, 250 words)

India's trade caught in the middle

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change.

Mains: General Studies 2

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Why in Focus?

- India-U.S. trade talks have reached a **"plateau"**, with limited scope for further concessions from either side.
- India faces a difficult external trade situation due to its **trade deficit with China**, dependence on Chinese imports and the possible impact of **U.S. tariffs and Artificial Intelligence (AI)** on its trade surplus with the U.S.

Key Highlights

- India runs a **trade deficit with China** but a **trade surplus with the U.S.**, creating a difficult balance in its external trade.
- India's imports from China include goods that are **difficult to replace in the short term**, making the deficit largely structural.
- The **heavy tariff on Indian goods** that Donald Trump has threatened to impose, and the **development of artificial intelligence (AI)**, could reverse its surplus with the U.S.
 - ◆ The rise of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** could also affect India's services exports by reducing demand for some Indian IT and other services.
- The value of the **rupee** against the U.S. dollar is influenced by the demand and supply of dollars in the foreign exchange market.
- India's demand for dollars mainly comes from **imports and capital outflows**, while exports and capital inflows increase the supply of dollars.
- India follows a **managed float exchange-rate system**, in which the Reserve Bank of India intervenes in the foreign exchange market to manage excessive fluctuations in the rupee.
- A rise in **crude oil prices** increases India's



demand for dollars and puts pressure on the rupee to depreciate.

- A fall in exports due to **U.S. tariffs** would reduce the supply of dollars and put additional pressure on the rupee.
- Persistent pressure on the rupee could force the RBI to use its **foreign exchange reserves**, potentially increasing capital outflows and further depreciation.
- The demand for dollars has exceeded supply in **four of the last nine quarters**, with demand rising sharply after the closure of the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- India's trade surplus with the U.S. is mainly driven by **goods**, while the surplus from services is comparatively smaller.
- If U.S. trade pressure continues, India could gradually **diversify its export markets**, particularly towards the **Global South**.
- India needs to strengthen **export growth**, diversify its export basket and promote **regional development** to reduce excessive dependence on the U.S. market.

Implications

- Higher U.S. tariffs could weaken India's **exports, trade surplus and foreign-exchange earnings**.
- A reduction in dollar inflows could increase pressure on the **rupee** and foreign-exchange reserves.
- Continued dependence on China for critical imports makes India's **trade deficit difficult to correct quickly**.
- Diversifying export markets could reduce India's vulnerability to **trade restrictions by major economies**.
- Strengthening domestic production and expanding exports can improve India's **external-sector resilience**.

Way Forward

- **Diversify export markets** by expanding trade with the Global South and other emerging economies.
- Broaden the **export product mix** instead of depending heavily on a limited range of goods and services.

- Reduce excessive dependence on imports by strengthening **domestic manufacturing and supply chains**.
- Use trade and industrial policies to improve **export competitiveness** and attract investment.
- Develop strategies to manage **AI-related disruption** while moving Indian services towards higher-value activities.

Mains Question

India faces a complex external-sector challenge due to its trade deficit with China and dependence on the U.S. market for exports. Discuss the measures India should adopt to strengthen its trade resilience. (250 words)

KEYWORDS

Repo Rate

- The repo rate is the **rate at which the Reserve Bank of India lends short-term funds to commercial banks against eligible securities**.
- An **increase in the repo rate generally makes borrowing costlier for banks**, which can reduce credit growth and aggregate demand.
- A **decrease in the repo rate generally makes funds cheaper for banks**, encouraging lending, investment and consumption.
- The **repo rate is an important monetary policy tool used by the RBI to manage inflation and economic activity**.
- Repo rate changes can **influence interest rates on loans and deposits, thereby affecting household spending, investment and savings**.
- Recently, the RBI raised the policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.5% and shifted its stance from neutral to calibrated tightening.



Nobel Prize in Chemistry

- The **2026 Nobel Prize in Chemistry** was awarded to **Henri B. Kagan and Kenso Soai**.
- They **were recognised for their work on asymmetric reactions and autocatalysis**.
- **Asymmetric synthesis** is a method of making one preferred form of a molecule instead of its mirror-image form.
- **Mirror-image form is a molecule with the same atoms and structure** but arranged as the exact mirror image of another molecule, like your left and right hands.
- **Autocatalysis** is a process where a product helps speed up the reaction that produces it.
- Their **work helps explain how a small difference between two mirror-image forms can become much larger during a chemical reaction**.
- It is **useful in drug manufacturing, where producing the correct form of a molecule can make medicines more effective and safer**.

Leprosy

- Also known as **Hansen's disease**, it is a chronic infectious disease caused by the slow-growing bacterium ***Mycobacterium leprae***, which primarily targets the **skin, peripheral nerves, upper respiratory tract, and eyes**.
- The disease has a **long incubation period** and spreads via **respiratory droplets during prolonged close contact with untreated individuals**, often leading to **nerve damage, muscle weakness, and permanent physical deformities** if left untreated.
- It is **entirely curable through Multidrug Therapy (MDT)**- a specific combination of three antibiotics (**Dapsone, Rifampicin, and Clofazimine**).
- India officially achieved **"national elimination status"** in **2005** (defined

as a **prevalence rate of less than 1 case per 10,000 population**) and has further reduced its prevalence to **0.57 per 10,000 in 2025**, though **active case detection remains critical**.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- **IOM** was established in **1951** and is part of the **United Nations System**.
- It is the leading **intergovernmental organization dealing with migration**.
- IOM has **174 member states**, with **8 states holding observer status**, and operates in **171 countries**.
- It works to promote **safe, humane and orderly migration** and supports migrants, especially those in vulnerable situations.
- Its work focuses on **saving lives and protecting migrants, finding solutions to displacement, and facilitating regular migration**.
- IOM also works with governments and other organisations on **migration policies, displacement, climate change, conflicts and emergencies**.

Places in News

Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve.



- Two cheetahs, Vyom and Neera, were recently released here, making it **Madhya Pradesh's third cheetah habitat** after **Kuno** and **Gandhi Sagar**.
- **Notified in 2023 as the 7th tiger reserve of Madhya Pradesh and the 54th in India**, it merges the former **Nauradehi and Durgavati Wildlife Sanctuaries**.
- It was established as a **compensatory ecological measure** for the **Ken-Betwa river interlinking project** and forms a crucial **wildlife corridor** connecting the **Panna, Satpura, and Bandhavgarh** reserves.
- Located on the **Vindhyan Plateau**, its **tropical dry deciduous forests** and **savannah grasslands** are drained by Ken River tributaries like the **Byarma and Bamner**.
- Named after the **16th-century Gond queen Rani Durgavati**, it hosts recovering **Bengal tiger populations**, **Indian wolves**, and **Critically Endangered White-rumped vultures**.

France



- **France** is a country in **northwestern Europe**, bounded by the **Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea**.
- Its capital and largest city is **Paris**, a major global cultural and commercial centre.
- France shares land borders with **Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Andorra**.
- The **Alps** lie along its eastern/southeastern region, while the **Pyrenees** form part of its southern border with Spain and Andorra.
- It is bordered by the **Bay of Biscay** to the west and the **English Channel** to the northwest.
- France has played an important role in **European and international affairs** and historically had colonies across different regions of the world.
- France was in the news due to **nationwide student protests over inadequate education funding, poor school conditions and teacher shortages**.