

Prelim Bits 17-07-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Global Gibbon Network (GGN)

The Global Gibbon Network (GGN) conducted its first meeting recently at Haikou, China.

Gibbons

- Gibbons are the smallest and fastest of all the apes.

Major Classification of Gibbons	Species of Hoolock Gibbon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crested Gibbons Hoolock Gibbons Siamang Dwarf Gibbons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western hoolock gibbon Eastern hoolock gibbon Skywalker hoolock gibbon

Hoolock Gibbon

- Habitat** - They live in tropical and sub-tropical forests of southeastern part of Asia.
- It is a primate species from the gibbon family of *Hylobatidae*.
- Hoolock Gibbons in India** - Zoologists believed that Northeast India have 2 species of the ape
 - The **Western Hoolock Gibbon** (Hoolock hoolock) - They are widely distributed in all the seven states of the Northeast.
 - The **Eastern hoolock Gibbon** (Hoolock leuconedys) - They are found only in eastern Arunachal Pradesh and in the Sadiya subdivision of Assam.
- But a study led by Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in 2021 proved through genetic analysis that there is only one species of ape in India.
- However, the red list maintained by the IUCN separated the hoolock gibbons in India and categories them as
 - Western Hoolock Gibbon - Endangered
 - Eastern Hoolock Gibbon - Vulnerable
- Both are on Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972.

IUCN states that gibbons are one of the most threatened families of primates.



Global Gibbon Conservation Network Initiative

- **Launched by** - Eco Foundation Global, the Hainan Institute of National Park, the IUCN Species Survival Commission Section on Small Apes, the Zoological Society of London and other organizations.
- **Aim** - It is a voluntary global platform to safeguard and conserve the gibbons and their habitats, by promoting participatory conservation policies, legislations, and actions.
- **Agenda** - The GGN focuses on implementation and action according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, Global Biodiversity Framework and other global agendas targets.

International Gibbon Day is celebrated on October 24th every year.

References

1. [The Hindu | China event raises concern over India's only ape](#)
2. [Global Gibbon Network | About GGN](#)
3. [IUCN | Establishment of the Global Gibbon Network Initiative](#)

Black Sea Grain Initiative

The Black Sea grain deal is going to expire soon and Russia has still not agreed to extend it.

- **Background** - Ukraine is among the world's biggest exporter of foodgrains, such as wheat and corn, and a major contributor to the *UN's food aid Programme*.
- When Russia invaded Ukraine and blockaded its ports, it sent food prices soaring and raised fears of food security in the poorer nations of the world.
- Pakistan, for instance, saw wheat prices skyrocket to crisis levels.

Black Sea Grain Deal Initiative

- It is a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in 2022 between Russia and Ukraine last year.
- It *enabled the movement of food grain* through the **Black Sea**, which was stranded following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- It reopened 3 of Ukraine's Black Sea ports - Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi.

From June, nearly 32 million tonnes of mostly corn and wheat have been exported by Ukraine under the deal.

- The deal has been extended twice, and Russia is now threatening to pull out from the initiative completely.
- Russia alleges that the deal is not favourable to them, as commitments made to remove obstacles to Russian food and fertiliser exports have not been fulfilled.

References

1. [The Indian Express | What is the Black Sea grain deal?](#)
2. [United Nations | Beacon on the Black Sea](#)

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

The United Kingdom recently signed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership treaty (CPTPP).

- The CPTPP is a free-trade agreement (FTA) launched in 2018.
- **Members** - Pacific Rim of 11 countries, which includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. (UK was recently added as a member).
- **Aim** - The CPTPP requires countries to eliminate or significantly cut trade barriers (reduce tariffs) and make strong commitments to opening services and investment markets.
- It also has rules addressing competition, intellectual property rights and protections for foreign companies.
- **Significance for U.K** - CPTPP will cut tariffs for UK exports to Asia Pacific countries.
- With UK membership, the trading bloc will have a combined GDP of 12 trillion pounds and account for 15% of global trade.
- Britain is keen to deepen trade ties in the Pacific region after Brexit in 2020.

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and US Withdrawal

- The TTP was a proposed free trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim economies initially with United States (US).
- In 2017, US President Donald Trump signed to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).
- Following the withdrawal, in 2018, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) was signed.

References

1. [The Indian Express | UK signs 'biggest trade deal' since Brexit](#)
2. [Institute for Government | About CPTPP](#)
3. [Government of Canada | About CPTPP](#)

Reduction of forest cover in Western Ghats

A recent analysis of land use shows that Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover.

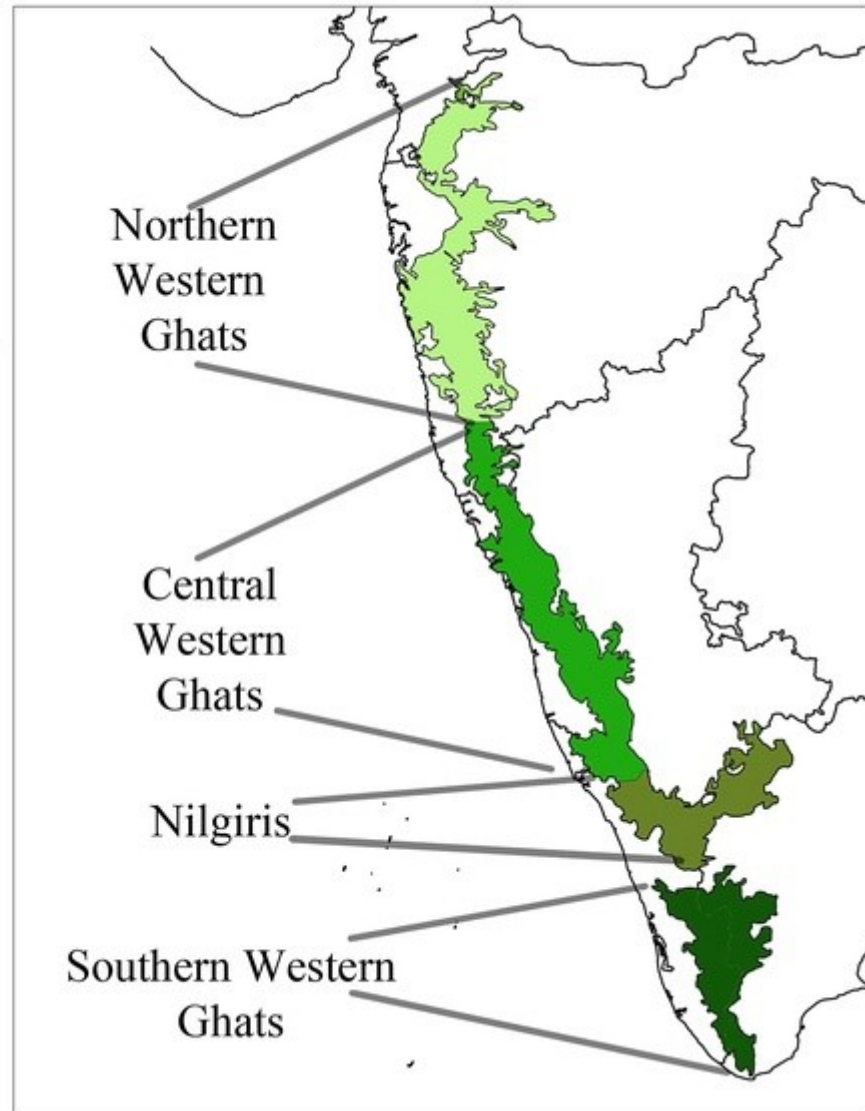
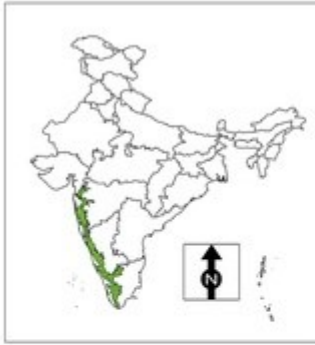
- The Western Ghats saw a loss of 5% evergreen forest cover with an increase of 4.5% built-up cover, and 9% agriculture area.
- Fragmentation analyses highlight that interior forest constitutes only 25% of the forest landmass, depicting the fragmentation pressure, impacting local ecology.

Ecological sensitivity or fragility refers to permanent and irreparable loss of extant life forms or significant damage to the natural processes of evolution and speciation with the alterations in the ecological integrity of a region.

Western Ghats

- It is a global biodiversity hotspot, extend along the west coast of India from the River Tapti in the north to the southern tip of India.
- It spreads across 6 states namely Karnataka followed by Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Goa and Gujarat.
- It contains about 6% of the land area of India but more than 30% of India's all plant, fish, herpeto-fauna, bird, and mammal species found in this region.
- Many species are endemic, such as the Nilgiri tahr (*Hemitragus hylocrius*) and the lion-tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*).
- Around 30% of the world's Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) population and 17% of the world's existing tigers (*Panthera tigris*) are in the western ghats.
- **Endemic**
 - 50% of India's amphibians
 - 67% of fish species
- **Forest** - Tropical wet evergreen forests to montane grasslands.

Approximately 245 million people live in the peninsular Indian states that receive most of their water supply from rivers originating in the Western Ghats.



References

[1. The Hindu | Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover](#)

[2. WWF India | About the Western Ghats](#)

Sand & Dust Storms

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)'s recent report says that Sand and dust storms (SDS) have increased dramatically in frequency and severity in recent years.

- Sand and dust storms are common meteorological hazards in *arid and semi-arid regions* (especially, Northern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia and China).
- They are usually caused by *thunderstorms or strong pressure gradients associated with cyclones* which increase wind speed over a wide area.
- These strong winds lift large amounts of sand and dust from bare, dry soils into the atmosphere, transporting them hundreds to thousands of kms away.
- Some 40% of aerosols in the troposphere (the lowest layer of Earth's atmosphere) are dust particles from wind erosion.
- There are 3 dust source types

- **Hydrologic** - Dust is linked to various water features
- **Natural** - Dust is emitted from land surfaces where land use is less than 30%.
- **Anthropogenic** - Sources where land use exceeds 30%.

Around 2 million tonnes of sand and dust enter the atmosphere annually and least 25% of global dust emissions originate from human activities.

- The average lifetime of dust particles in the atmosphere ranges from a few hours for particles with a *diameter larger than 10 µm*, to more than 10 days for the sub-micrometric ones.
- **Interaction with weather and climate** - Dust particles, if coated by pollution, act as condensation nuclei for warm cloud formation and as efficient ice nuclei agents for cold cloud generation, thus affecting the amount and location of precipitation.
- **Impacts on human health** - Particles larger than 10 µm can damage external organs mostly causing skin and eye irritations, conjunctivitis and enhanced susceptibility to ocular infection.
- Inhalable particles, those *smaller than 10 µm*, are associated with respiratory disorders.
- **Impacts on the environment** - Surface dust deposits are a *source of micro-nutrients* for both continental and maritime ecosystems.
- Negative impacts include reduction in photosynthetic activity, reduction in crop yields, loss of plant tissue and increased soil erosion.

UN Sand and Dust Storm (SDS) Coalition

- The United Nations Coalition on Combating SDS was launched at COP 14 in Delhi.
- It was established in response to the United Nations General Assembly resolution of 2017 through the efforts of UNEP.
- Currently, there are 19 members including both UN and non-UN agencies - CBD, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, ICAO, ITU, IUCN, UNCCD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNFCCC, UN-Habitat, UNITAR, WHO, WMO, World Bank.

References

- [1. Down to Earth | Why sand & dust storms pose challenge?](#)
- [2. World Meteorological Organization | Sand and Dust Storms](#)