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CURRENT AFFAIRS



Pygmy Hog

Context:

Recently, eight captive-bred pygmy hogs, the world's rarest and smallest wild pigs, were released in the Manas national Park of Assam.

This is the second batch to have been reintroduced into the wild under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP) in a year.

About:

Pygmy Hog:

- **Scientific Name:** Porcula Salvania
- **Features:**
 - It is one of the very few mammals that build its own home, or nest, complete with a 'roof'.
 - It is also an indicator species. Its presence reflects the health of its primary habitat, the tall, wet grasslands of the region.
- **Habitat:**
 - It thrives in wet grassland.
 - Once found along a narrow strip of tall and wet grassland plains on the Himalayan foothills – from Uttar Pradesh to Assam, through Nepal's terai areas and Bengal's duars. Today found mainly in a small population in
- **Protection Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: Endangered
 - **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Threats:**
 - Habitat (grassland) loss and degradation, and illegal hunting.

Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP):

- The PHCP is collaboration among Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of UK, Assam Forest Department, Wild Pig Specialist Group of IUCN and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It is currently being implemented by NGOs – Aaranyak and EcoSystems India.
- Conservation of pygmy hog was initiated by noted naturalist Gerald Durrell and his trust in 1971.
- The pygmy hog was brought back from near-extinction by the partnership effort, and now moving towards the establishment of a population across the entire range.
- Six hogs were captured from the Bansbari range of the Manas National Park in 1996 for starting the breeding programme.
- The reintroduction programme began in 2008 with the Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, Orang National Park and Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary, all of them are in Assam
- By 2025, the PHCP plans to release 60 pygmy hogs in Manas.

Antarctic Treaty

Context:

Recently, the **60th anniversary** of the Antarctic treaty was celebrated.

The Antarctic treaty remains the only example of a **single treaty that governs a whole continent.**

It is also the foundation of a **rules-based international order for a continent without a permanent population.**

About:

- The Antarctic Treaty was signed between **12 countries in Washington on 1st December 1959** for making the **Antarctic Continent a demilitarized zone to be preserved for scientific research only.**
- **The twelve original signatories** are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the UK and the US.
- It **entered into force in 1961** and has since been acceded by many other nations.
- Antarctica is defined as all of the **land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude.**

- Recently, an enormous iceberg 'A-76 has calved from the **western side of the Ronne Ice Shelf, lying in the Weddell Sea**, in Antarctic
- Currently it has 54 parties. **India became a member of this treaty in 1983.**

Headquarters: Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Major Provisions:

- Promoting the **freedom of scientific research.**
- Countries can use the continent only for **peaceful purposes.**
- Prohibition of **military activities, nuclear tests** and the **disposal of radioactive waste**
- Neutralizing **territorial sovereignty**, this means a limit was placed on making any new claim or enlargement of an existing claim.
- It put a **freeze on any disputes between claimant** over their territories on the continent.

Dispute & Resolution:

- There have been tensions from time to time. **Argentina and the UK, for instance, have overlapping claims to territory on the continent.**
- However, a key reason why the treaty has been able to survive has been its **ability to evolve through a number of additional conventions** and other legal protocols.
- These have **dealt with the conservation of marine living resources, prohibitions on mining**, and the **adoption of comprehensive environmental protection mechanisms.**
- As disputes have arisen over the years, many have been addressed through the expansion of the treaty framework with these agreements. This framework is now referred to as the Antarctic treaty system.

Antarctic Treaty System:

- It is the whole **complex of arrangements** made for the purpose of **regulating relations among states in the Antarctic.**
- Its purpose is to **ensure in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes** and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.
- It is a **global achievement** and has been a hallmark of **international cooperation for more than 50 years.**

- These agreements are **legally binding and purpose-built for the unique geographical, environmental and political characteristics** of the Antarctic and form a robust international governance framework for the region.

Major International Agreements of the Treaty System:

- The 1959 **Antarctic Treaty**.
- The 1972 **Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals**.
- The 1980 **Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources**.
- The 1991 **Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty**.

Way Forward

- While the Antarctic Treaty has been able to successfully respond to a range of challenges, **circumstances are radically different in the 2020s compared to the 1950s**. Antarctica is much **more accessible**, partly due to **technology** but also Climate change
- **More countries now have substantive interests in the continent** than the original 12. Some global resources are becoming scarce, especially oil.
- There is considerable speculation as to **China's interests in Antarctic resources, especially fisheries and minerals**, and whether China may seek to exploit weaknesses in the treaty system to secure access to those resources.

Therefore, all of the treaty signatories, but especially those with significant stakes in the continent, **need to give the future of the treaty more attention**.