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Dhole: Asian wild dog

- A new study reports a reappearance in the high mountains of Central Asia nearly 30 years after the last recorded appearance of the dhole or Asiatic wild dog.
- The presence of a drum has been observed at the Bek-Tosot Conservancy, located in the Osh region of southern Kyrgyzstan, a few kilometers from the Tajikistan border. It is located in the Pamir mountain range of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China.

Dhole:

- The dhole (*Cuon alpinus*) is a wild carnivorous animal that is a member of the Canidae family and the mammalian class.
- It is also called 'Asiatic Wild Dog'.

Natural Habitat:

- Historically, drums have been found throughout southern Russia, Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia.
- According to recent research and currently obtained maps, dholes are now restricted to South and Southeast Asia with the northernmost region only in China.
- In India these are found in three regions i.e. Western and Eastern Ghats, Central Indian landscape and North-East India.
- According to a new recent study, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh rank high in the conservation of endangered dholes in India.
- **Ecological role:** Dhole play an important role as top predators in the forest ecosystem.

Protection Status of Dhole:

- It is listed as **Endangered in the IUCN Red List.**
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife and Flora (**CITES**): **Appendix II**
- Listed in **Schedule II** under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 [Wildlife (Protection) Act].**

Population Decline:

- **Loss of Habitat:** Due to deforestation and fragmentation of forest corridors, their habitat area is decreasing.
- **Lack of Prey:** The population of ungulates, the main prey of the dhole, is rapidly declining due to their hunting and habitat loss.
- Due to hunting of animals and diseases transmitted to them from domesticated dogs.

Vande Bharat Train

- In the Union Budget for the year 2022-2023, the Finance Minister has proposed to build 400 new Vande Bharat trains in the next three years.
- Investment of Rs 50,000 crore is expected in manufacturing of 400 trains, while Rs 106 crore has been invested per train on the existing Vande Bharat at the cost of 2018.
- The proposal to run the new train is in addition to the ongoing plan to make it possible to operate 75 Vande Bharat trains across India by Independence Day in the year 2023.

Vande Bharat Train:

- This indigenously designed and manufactured semi high speed, self-propelled train is seen as the next step for Indian Railways in terms of speed and passenger comfort after introduction of Rajdhani trains.
- The first Vande Bharat train was manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai as part of the 'Make in India' program at a cost of about Rs 100 crore.
- Vande Bharat was India's first attempt at adaptation of train set technology as compared to conventional systems of passenger coaches operated by separate locomotives.
- Although train set configuration is a complex process but easy to maintain, it is more flexible in train operation with less energy consumption.
- At present, two Vande Bharat Express are in operation – first, between New Delhi and Varanasi and second, between New Delhi to Katra.
- For 'better efficiency' in 400 new trains, railways is considering to make many of these trains from aluminum instead of steel.
- The aluminum body will make each train set approximately 40-80 tonnes lighter as compared to the present Vande Bharat train, i.e., lower energy consumption as well as better speed capability.

Features of Vande Bharat Trains:

- During the development phase Vande Bharat trains operated without locomotives based on a propulsion system, called Distributed Traction Power Technology, by which the train set was driven.
- Its coaches include passenger amenities including on-board WiFi, GPS based passenger information system, CCTV, automatic doors in all coaches, revolving chairs and bio-vacuum type toilets in the aircraft.
- It can travel up to 160 kmph due to high acceleration, per hour speed, thereby reducing travel time by 25% to 45%.
- It also has a braking system with electricity for better energy efficiency, making it cost, energy and environment friendly.

Importance:

- Manufacturing of these 400 train sets and their equipment will create 10,000-15,000 jobs in three years.
- The investment component of about Rs 50,000 crore in the country's 'rolling stock' industry will give impetus to sectors related to manufacturing, supply, etc.
- It will also improve the finance and operational efficiency of the Railways.

Way forward:

- Indian Railways is moving towards an era of new travel experience with advanced next generation trains. At a time when low-cost airlines and a smooth road network offer tough competition, new trains can help maintain and even increase railway traffic.
- Timely implementation of this ambitious project and keeping in view the travel demands of different sections will go a long way in ensuring the success of Vande Bharat Project.

Lata Mangeshkar

- *Bharat Ratna awardee Lata Mangeshkar, 92, died on 6 February after being infected with Kovid-19.*
- *Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar was born on 28 September 1929 in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.*
- *Lata Mangeshkar has always been an example of God-given melodious voice, lively expression and incredible ability to grasp words very quickly.*
- *Due to these characteristics, this talent of his was recognized very soon. Lata ji also has the distinction of recording maximum number of songs.*
- *Apart from film songs, he has also sung non-film songs very well. Lata ji's talent got recognition in the year 1947 when she got a chance to sing a song in the movie "Aapki Seva Mein".*
- *After this song, he got a recognition in the film world and got a chance to sing many songs one after the other.*
- *After the song "Aayega Aane Wala" sung by him in the year 1949, the number of his fans started increasing day by day. Meanwhile he worked with all the famous musicians of that time.*
- *In the year 2001, he was awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award. He won 3 National Film Awards (1972, 1974, 1990) and 12 Bengal Film Journalists Association Awards (1964, 1967–1973, 1975, 1981, 1983, 1985).*
- *She has also won four Filmfare Awards for Best Female Playback Singer. He was awarded the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award in the year 1993.*

Indian Footwear and Leather Development Program

- Financial outlay of Rs.1700 crore has been approved for continuation of Indian Footwear and Leather Development Program (IFLDP) from the year 2021-22.
- IFLDP has been approved by the Union Cabinet as a continuation of the earlier IFLADP (Indian Footwear Leather and Accessories Development Programme) by March 31, 2026 or till further review, whichever is earlier.
- IFLADP was announced for three financial years (2017-18 to 2019-20) with an outlay of Rs 2,600 crore.

IFLDP Scheme:

- It is a central sector scheme aimed at developing infrastructure for the leather sector, addressing specific environmental concerns, facilitating additional investment, generating employment and increasing production.

Sub-schemes sanctioned under the programme:

- Sustainable technology and environment promotion, Integrated Development of Leather Sector (IDLS), establishment of institutional facilities, mega leather footwear and accessories cluster development, brand promotion, and development of design studios.
- Development of Design Studio (proposed outlay of Rs.100 crore) is a new sub-scheme that will boost marketing/export relationship, provide a buyer-seller platform, showcase designs to international buyers and act as an interface for trade fairs Will do.

Effect of the preceding IFLADP:

- The program provides benefits for creating quality employment, skill development, fair work, making the industry more environment friendly and promoting a sustainable production system, especially for women.
- Leather clusters located in different parts of the country have made gains in terms of poverty reduction, gender equality, sector specific skills/education etc., thus achieving several Sustainable Development Goals.
- Other National Development Plans (NDPs) such as economic growth, job creation, good health and wellness, infrastructure development, affordable and clean energy and other environmental benefits are ensured by the IFLAD programme.
- Most of the NDPs are aligned with the SDGs.

Current Status of Leather Industry of India:

- India is the second largest producer of footwear and leather garments in the world after China and the second largest exporter of leather garments in the world (after China).
- The industry is known for its consistent high export earnings and is one of the top ten foreign exchange earners for the country.
- India has 20% of the world's cattle and buffalo population and 11% of goat and sheep population as leather raw material.
- Leather industry is an employment intensive industry which provides employment to more than 4 million people from weaker sections of the society.
- Women constitute about 30% of the leather products industry. The leather industry in India is one of the youngest workforce with 55% of the workforce below the age of 35.
- Major markets of Indian leather products are USA, Germany, UK, Italy, France, Spain, Netherlands and UAE etc.

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