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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Vaquita porpoise

- According to the United States Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), the vaquita porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*) is near extinction and urgent protection measures are needed to save its remaining population.

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Porpoise

- Porpoises are one of the smallest members of the cetacean family (whales, porpoises and dolphins).
- They are only remotely related to dolphins (they had a common ancestor about 15 million years ago).
- There are only seven species of porpoise; their most popular species is the widely found harbor porpoise.
- There are several species, including the vaquita, that are rarely studied. Whatever information we have got about them has been obtained after the study of the same organisms that reach the shores by flowing with the ocean waves.

Vaquita Porpoise : The Hindu Analysis

- Vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) is the smallest cetacean in the world. Its name means "little cow" in Spanish.

- It has a dark ring around its eyes which is its most distinctive feature, as well as its proportionally large dorsal fins.
- It is unique among all porpoises in that it is the only species in the family to live in warm waters, and it is believed that its dorsal fins are adapted to live in warmer waters, which allow excess body heat to adapt.
- Like many other species of porpoise, the vaquita is shy and cunning and will evade when it comes into contact with boats.

Accommodation : The Hindu Analysis

- This species is found only in the northern Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez). They are usually found in shallow water (up to a depth of 50 m).

To risk : The Hindu Analysis

- The vaquita's population has declined drastically over the decades. In recent times, gill-nets used to catch the totoaba (a large fish whose swim bladders are in high demand) have reduced their numbers further.
- Fixed fishing nets (gill-nets) used for fishing often trap small creatures, known as by-catches.

Protection status : The Hindu Analysis

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered.

State sponsors of terrorism

- Recently Ukraine has requested the US to designate Russia as a “state sponsor of terrorism”.
- This would result in the imposition of the most stringent of all sanctions against Russia available to the US.

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State sponsor of terrorism means

- Under this, the US Secretary of State has the power to designate “countries that repeatedly provide support for acts of international terrorism” as “state sponsors of terrorism”.

The US can impose four types of sanctions on the countries included in this list : The Hindu Analysis

- Restrictions on US foreign aid
 - Ban on defense export and sale
 - Certain controls on the export of dual-use goods
 - Miscellaneous financial and other restrictions
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- Under this, sanctions can also be imposed on those countries and individuals who engage in trade with specified countries.

Countries included in this list : The Hindu Analysis

So far there are four countries on the list of state sponsors of terrorism:

- **Syria** (designated 29 December 1979)

- **Iran** (designated 19 January 1984),
- **North Korea** (designated on 20 November 2017).
- On 12 January 2021, Cuba was re-designated as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Laws Enrolling as State Sponsors of Terrorism : The Hindu Analysis

There are currently three laws that authorize the Secretary of State to nominate a country to provide repeated support for acts of international terrorism:

- **The Foreign Aid Act of 1961:** it prohibits the transfer of most aid;

Arms Export Control Act (AECA) : The Hindu Analysis

- It prohibits exports, credits, guarantees, other financial aid and export licensing controlled by the State Department; and

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Export Control Act of 2018

- Of these three laws, only AECA defines offensive activities to a limited extent as terrorism, while none of the three Acts defines “international terrorism” in the broadest sense.

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