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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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GANGETIC RIVER DOLPHIN

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Gangetic River Dolphin". This topic has relevance in the "Environment and Ecology" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What are the characteristics of Gangetic River Dolphin?

For Mains:

GS3: Environment and Ecology

Why in the news?

A recent report from scientists and researchers discloses that 19 Gangetic river dolphins were successfully saved from the irrigation canals within the Ganga-Ghagra basin in Uttar Pradesh from 2013 to 2020.

About Gangetic River Dolphin

- The Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*), is a toothed whale belonging to the Platanistidae family. These dolphins represent one of the Earth's ancient species, sharing this distinction with certain types of turtles, crocodiles, and sharks.
- The discovery of the Ganges river dolphin dates back to the year 1801. It is India's National Aquatic Animal.

National Aquatic Animal "The Gangetic Dolphin"

Status

IUCN status Endangered

ACTS/CONVENTIONS

Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Project Dolphin on lines of Project Tiger (by MOEFCC)

CHARACTERISTICS

An adult dolphin could weigh between 70 kg and 90 kg. The breeding season of the Gangetic dolphin extends from January to June.

GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD

Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems. Vikramshila Ganges Dolphin Sanctuary.

POPULATION

3,500-5,000

WEIGHT

330-374 pounds

LENGTH

7-8.9 feet

HABITATS

Freshwater rivers

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Platanista gangetica gangetica



Habitat:

- Ganges River Dolphins predominantly inhabit the freshwaters of Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers, spanning across the regions of India, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
- They have adapted well to these river systems' murky and swiftly flowing waters.

Distinctive Appearance:

- Gangetic River Dolphins are renowned for their unique physical traits. They possess a lengthy, slender beak and a hump on their back, setting them apart from other river dolphins.
- Their colouring typically leans towards greyish-brown, lacking the conventional dorsal fin observed in marine dolphins.

Echolocation:

- Gangetic River Dolphins employ echolocation to navigate and locate prey in the turbid waters like their dolphin counterparts.
- They emit sound waves that bounce off objects, returning to them and assisting in creating a mental map of their surroundings.

Diet:

- Their diet mainly consists of various fish species found in freshwater rivers.
- Gangetic River Dolphins are skilled hunters and use their sharp teeth to capture and consume their prey.

Reproduction:

- These dolphins have a slow reproductive rate, with females giving birth to a single calf every 2-3 years. The gestation period lasts for around 9-10 months.

Conservation Status:

- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Gangetic River Dolphin holds an **endangered** status.
- It is legally protected under **Schedule 1** of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**.
- It is listed in **Appendix 1** of both the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (**CITES**) and the Convention on Migratory Species (**CMS**).

Challenges:

- The construction of over 50 dams and various irrigation projects has fragmented Ganges river dolphin populations, isolating them into distinct groups.
- This isolation increases the risk of inbreeding and heightens their vulnerability to additional threats as they cannot migrate to new areas.
- Their population has declined due to various threats, including habitat degradation, pollution, and accidental entanglement in fishing nets.

Initiatives for conservation:

- **Project Dolphin:**
 - Initiated in 2020 by the Prime Minister, Project Dolphin focuses on preserving Ganges river dolphins and the riverine ecosystem.
 - The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, India, financially supports the project.
 - It systematically monitors the species' status and potential threats to develop and implement a conservation action plan.
- **Wildlife Institute of India:**
 - Since 2016, the Wildlife Institute of India has been actively involved in developing a Conservation Action Plan for the Gangetic River Dolphins through their Species Conservation Programs, funded by CAMPA.
 - The plan from 2022 to 2047 has been formulated to ensure the well-being of the river dolphin and aquatic habitats.

- **Protected Areas:**

- Important habitats of the Gangetic river dolphin along the Ganges river have been designated Protected Areas, such as the Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary in Bihar.

Sources:

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/19-dolphins-rescued-alive-from-canals-of-ganga-ghagra-basin-says-study/article67392753.ece>

Q1. With reference to the Gangetic River Dolphin, consider the following statements:

1. They are only found in freshwater river systems.
2. Unlike the Dolphins, these Gangetic River dolphins cannot navigate and locate prey in turbid waters.
3. Being vegetarian, their diet mainly consists of various plant species found in freshwater rivers.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following with reference to Gangetic River Dolphins:

1. Dolphins are one of the oldest creatures in the world.
2. Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh has been designated a protected area for these dolphins.

Which of the abovementioned statements is correct?

- (a) 1 Only
- (b) 2 Only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Q3. Discuss the challenges facing the conservation of the Gangetic River Dolphin and the initiatives aimed at addressing these challenges, highlighting their importance and effectiveness in ensuring the survival of this endangered species.

Gaurav Nikumbh

GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Global Gender Gap Index". This topic has relevance in the Social Justice section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About the Global Gender Gap Index?

For Mains:

GS 2: Social Justice

Key Findings from the Global Gender Gap Index 2023 Report?

Status of South Asia and India in the Global Gender Gap Index (2023)?

Why in the news?

The Global Gender Gap Index is an annual report introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006. It serves as a critical tool to assess and track the state and evolution of gender parity worldwide, highlighting areas where gender gaps persist.

Key Findings from the Global Gender Gap Index 2023 Report:

Progress Towards Full Gender Parity:

- The report states that no country has yet achieved complete gender parity, emphasizing that there is still work to be done.

Top-Performing Country:

- Iceland has consistently secured the top position for the 14th year in a row, with a score of 91.2%. It is the sole country to successfully bridge more than 90% of its gender gap.

Gender Gap Progress Across Dimensions:

- The report measures gender gaps in four main dimensions: Health and Survival, Educational Attainment, Economic Participation and Opportunity, and Political Empowerment.
- The health and Survival gender gap has closed by 96%, the Educational Attainment gap by 95.2%, the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap by 60.1%, and the Political Empowerment gap by 22.1%.

Projections for Closing Gender Gaps:

- The analysis suggests that the time required to close gender gaps varies across dimensions. The Political Empowerment gender gap is projected to take 162 years to close, while the Economic Participation and Opportunity gender gap is estimated to require 169 years. In contrast, the Educational Attainment gender gap is expected to be resolved within 16 years.

Challenges in Achieving Gender Parity in the Labor Market:

- Achieving gender parity in the labor market remains a significant challenge. Women's participation in the global labor market has seen a decline in recent years, and substantial disparities persist in various aspects of economic opportunity.
- Despite women returning to the workforce at higher rates than men, gender gaps still exist, especially in leadership roles.

Status of South Asia and India in the Global Gender Gap Index (2023)

India's Rank and Progress:

- In the Gender Gap Report of 2023 by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India was ranked 127 among 146 countries, showing an improvement of eight places from the previous year's ranking.
- India's rank in 2022 was 135, indicating that it has made progress by 1.4 percentage points, moving towards its 2020 gender parity levels.

Gender Gap in India:

- The report indicates that India has closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap, with notable achievements in educational parity.
- India has reached parity in enrollment across all levels of education, which is a significant advancement.

Economic Participation and Opportunity:

- However, in economic participation and opportunity, India has achieved only 36.7% parity. This dimension remains a substantial challenge for gender equality.

Wages and Income Parity:

- While there has been some improvement in wage and income parity, the representation of women in senior positions and technical roles has slightly decreased since the previous report.

Political Empowerment:

- India has a 25.3% parity in political empowerment, and women make up 15.1% of Members of Parliament (MPs).

Local Governance Representation:

- Among 117 countries with data available since 2017, India is among 18 nations where women's representation in local governance exceeds 40%, standing at 44.4%.

Sex Ratio Improvement:

- India has seen a 1.9 percentage point improvement in the sex ratio at birth, contributing to increased gender parity after more than a decade.
- India's sex ratio at birth, while improving, is slightly lower than top-scoring countries, standing at 92.7% compared to the leading countries with 94.4% gender parity at birth.

The Global Gender Gap Index reveals that India has made notable progress in certain areas of gender parity but continues to face challenges, especially in economic participation and opportunity. The report underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to close gender gaps, empower women politically, and ensure greater representation in decision-making roles.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-climbs-eight-places-to-127-in-global-gender-index-says-wef-report/article66994156.ece>

Q.1 Which organization is responsible for providing the rankings in the 'Global Gender Gap Index' for countries worldwide?

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) UNDP

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Gender equality is not just a goal in itself but a catalyst for achieving sustainable development." Elaborate.

Rishabh

