

25 – 02 – 2022

News: Saltwater Crocodiles

- Saltwater Crocodiles, used to be found in Vietnam and southern China, became extinct in these areas due to human activity.

Salt Water Crocodile

- Salt water crocodile is also known as **estuarine crocodile, Indo-Pacific crocodile, marine crocodile, sea crocodile or saltie**.
- It is the **largest of the 23 species of 'extant' or living crocodilians**. This includes 'true crocodiles', alligators and caimans.
- It prefers **Saltwater/ Brackish water from India's east coast across Southeast Asia and the Sundaic region to northern Australia and Micronesia**.
- The 'saltie' is today found in **three locations in India — the Sunderbans, Bhitarkanika National Park and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- It is also found in **Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Australia and the Solomon Islands**.
- During antiquity the species' range extended from the Seychelles and Kerala, India in the west through to southeastern China, Palau and Vanuatu in the east.

- It can also tolerate saltwater in the oceans and can travel long distances over the open ocean, making use of tidal currents.
- IUCN status: **Least Concern (LC)**.
- CITES status: **Appendix I** (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
- Wildlife protection Act: **Schedule I**.
- Threats faced by Saltie include **Habitat destruction, fragmentation, and transformation, fishing activities and use of crocodile parts for medicinal purposes**.
- A list of animals including Salt Water Crocodile are included in the '**list of priority species to be secured**' under the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**.
- Saltwater crocodiles are included in the **Indian Crocodile Conservation Project** as a target species along with **Gharials and Mugger Crocodiles**.
- Recently, UT of Andaman and Nicobar has sent a proposal to Central government to delist Salt water crocodile from Schedule I to control the number of population by listing them in Schedule V (vermin). The UT reports that increase in no. of crocodiles leads to human-animal conflict. The proposal, however, was turned down by the Union government.

News: Russia – Ukraine Conflict

- Russia launched an all out invasion of Ukraine by land, air and sea on Thursday, the biggest attack by one state against another in Europe since the Second World War and confirmation of the worst fears of the West.

Background

- Ukraine was a member of the Soviet Union until 1991 when it disintegrated, and Russia has tried to maintain the country in its orbit since then.
- In 2014, a separatist insurgency started in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, Donetsk Basin. The insurgents were pro – Russian, who wanted the area to be integrated with Russia.
- Russia further gained a maritime advantage in the region due to its invasion and annexation of Crimea. This resulted in the expulsion of Russia from G–8 grouping making it G–7.
- As a result, both the US and the EU have pledged to safeguard the integrity of Ukraine's borders.



Importance of Ukraine to Russia

- Ukraine and Russia have shared **cultural and linguistic ties** for hundreds of years.
- Ukraine was the most powerful country in the Soviet Union after Russia.
- Ukraine has been a **hub for commercial industries, factories and defence manufacturing.**
- Ukraine also **provides Russia with access to the Black Sea and crucial connectivity to the Mediterranean Sea.**

Reasons for Russian Aggression

Economic Factors

- Russia, considering the economic significance of Ukraine, **sought Ukraine's membership in the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), which is a free trade agreement that came into being in 2015.**
- With its huge market and advanced agriculture and industrial output, Ukraine was supposed to play an important role. But **Ukraine refused to join the agreement.**

Geo-Political and Strategic Factors

- Russia claims that the eastward expansion by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which they call “enlargement”, has threatened Russia’s interests and has asked for written security guarantees from NATO.
- NATO, led by the U.S., has planned to install missile defence systems in Eastern Europe in countries like Poland and the Czech Republic to counter Russia’s intercontinental-range missiles.

Russia – Ukraine Latest Developments

- Russia has been indulging in military build-up along its border with Ukraine, an aspiring NATO member. Russia has stated that its troop deployment is in response to NATO’s steady eastward expansion. Russia argues that its moves are aimed at protecting its own security considerations.
- Russia has mobilised around 1, 00,000 troops on its border with Ukraine.
- Russia seeks assurance from the US that Ukraine shall not be inducted into NATO.
- This has resulted in tensions between Russia and the West which have been supportive of Ukraine. The U.S. has assured Ukraine that it will “respond decisively” in case of an invasion by Russia.

Russia's demands

- Russia has demanded a ban on further expansion of NATO that includes countries like Ukraine and Georgia that share Russia's borders.
- Russia asked NATO to pull back its military deployments to the 1990s level and prohibit the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the bordering areas.
- Further, Russia asked NATO to curb its military cooperation with Ukraine and other former Soviet republics.

The response from the West

- The U.S. has ruled out changing NATO's "open-door policy" which means, NATO would continue to induct more members.
- The U.S. also says it would continue to offer training and weapons to Ukraine.
- The U.S. is said to be open to a discussion regarding missile deployment and a mutual reduction in military exercises in Eastern Europe.
- Germany has also warned Russia that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline would be stopped if Russia were to invade Ukraine.
- The U.S. threatens Russia by imposing new economic sanctions in case of attempts of invasion against Ukraine.

Implications on India

- An invasion by Russia would put pressure on India to choose between the Western alliance and Russia.
- Maintaining strong relations with Russia serves India's national interests. India has to retain a strong strategic alliance with Russia as a result, India cannot join any Western strategy aimed at isolating Russia.
- There is a possibility of CAATSA sanctions on India by the U.S. as a result of the S-400
- A pact between the US and Russia might affect Russia's relations with China. This might allow India to expand on its efforts to re-establish ties with Russia.
- The issue with Ukraine is that the world is becoming increasingly economically and geopolitically interconnected. Any improvement in Russia-China ties has ramifications for India.
- There is also an impact on the strong Indian diaspora present in the region, threatening the lives of thousands of Indian students.

Indian Stand on the Issue

- India called for “a peaceful resolution of the situation through sustained diplomatic efforts for long-term peace and stability in the region and beyond”.

- Immediately after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, **India abstained from voting in the UN General Assembly on a resolution that sought to condemn Russia.**
- In 2020, India voted against a Ukraine-sponsored resolution in the UN General Assembly that sought to condemn alleged human rights violations in Crimea.
- India's position is largely rooted in neutrality and has adapted itself to the post-2014 status quo on Ukraine.