

28– 07 – 2022

News: SC upholds powers of arrest, raid under PMLA

- The Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld the core amendments made to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), which gives the government and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) virtually unbridled powers of summons, arrest, and raids, and makes bail nearly impossible while shifting the burden of proof of innocence on to the accused rather than the prosecution.
- The section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) made offences to be cognizable and non-bailable and no person accused of an offence shall be released on bail or on his own bond unless the Public Prosecutor is given the opportunity to oppose the application for such release and where the Public Prosecutor opposes the application, the court is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accused is not likely to commit any offence while on bail.

Enforcement Directorate (ED)

- Even though Enforcement Directorate (ED) is not constituted under any Statute, it is formed for the enforcement of 2 key acts: Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

- ED is a part of **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**.
- It is **composed of officers from the IRS, IAS, IPS and Indian Corporate Law Service**.

News: Forest Rights Act: well begun, ready for the home run

- Odisha is planning to fully implement the Forest Right Act of 2006 by 2024.

Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)

- The **FRA enacted in 2006 recognises the rights of forest dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to forest resources on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other socio cultural needs**.
- It **recognizes and vest the forest rights and occupation in Forest land in Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) who have been residing in such forests for generations**.
- The act also **establishes the responsibilities and authority for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance of FDST and OTFD**.
- It **strengthens the conservation regime of the forests while ensuring livelihood and food security of the FDST and OTFD**.

- It seeks to rectify colonial injustice to the FDST and OTFD who are integral to the very survival and sustainability of the forest ecosystem.
- The Gram Sabha is the authority to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of Individual Forest Rights (IFR) or Community Forest Rights (CFR) or both that may be given to FDST and OTFD.

Rights under the Forest Rights Act

Title rights

- The FRA gives FDST and OTFD the right to ownership to land farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares.
- Ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family prior to December 13, 2005 and no new lands will be granted.

Use rights

- The rights of the dwellers extend to extracting Minor Forest Produce, grazing areas etc.

Minor Forest Produce

- An important source of livelihood for tribal people is non-wood forest products, generally termed 'Minor Forest Produce (MFP)'.

- Section 2(i) of the Forest Rights Act defines minor forest produce as all non-timber forest produce of plant origin and will include bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, Honey, Lac, etc.

Relief and development rights

- To rehabilitate in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.

Forest management rights

- It includes the right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

News: Monarch Butterfly

- Recently, IUCN has upgraded the **protection status of Monarch Butterflies to Endangered.**

Monarch Butterfly

- Monarch Butterfly is a **sub species of the Danaus plexippus butterfly that travels around 4,000 kilometres across America.**
- It's the **most recognizable butterfly species** that are **essential pollinators and further provides various ecosystem services** such as **maintaining the global food web.**
- A **smaller population of the species is also found in countries like Australia, Hawaii, and India.**

Issues

- Their **population in the continent has declined 23-72% over the last decade.**
- The population of the eastern monarchs that migrate from the eastern United States and Canada — the bigger group — also shrunk by 84% from 1996-2014.
- They **follow a unique lifestyle as they breed in only one particular plant, The Milkweeds,** but the removal of this plant by farmers led to their decrease in population.

- Further, farmers also widely use a weedicide for the removal of milkweeds.
- Weedicide are known as the weed killers or pesticides that are used to kill unwanted plants.
- Legal and illegal logging and deforestation make space for agriculture and urban development, which causes habitat destruction.
- Frequent storms and droughts are more intense and disrupt flowering cycles, which led to the killing millions of butterflies.

News: Snow Leopard and its prey

- Recently, a study conducted by Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) under National Mission on Himalayan Studies highlighted relation between habitat uses by Snow Leopard, Siberian ibex and blue sheep.
- It aimed at examining how the predator used habitat in presence or absence of its prey species and vice-versa.

Key Highlights of the Study

- It was found that, the likelihood of detecting a snow leopard was increased if the place was utilised by its prey species, ibex and blue sheep.
- In the case of prey species, the probability of detection was low when the predator (snow leopard) was present and observed.

- Further both species were less likely to detect together than expected.
- According to the study, habitat variables such barren area, grassland, aspect, slope, and distance to water were major drivers of habitat use for both the snow leopard and its prey species.
- Predators such as snow leopards regulated the populations of herbivores such as blue sheep and Siberian ibex in the mountains, protecting the health of grasslands.
- A long-term absence of snow leopards could cause trophic cascades as unregulated populations would likely increase, depleting vegetation cover.

Snow Leopard

- Snow Leopard inhabits at the higher Himalayan & trans-Himalayan landscape in 4 states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh and UT's of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.
- This area contributes to 5% of global snow leopard range.
- Snow leopard acts as an indicator species to the health of the mountain ecosystem in which they live, due to their position as the top predator in the food web. It is also declared as a flagship species by the Government of India for the high-altitude Himalayas.

- IUCN Status: Vulnerable.
- Wildlife protection Act: Schedule I.
- CITES Status: Appendix I.
- CMS Status: Appendix I.
- Recently, the 1st Snow Leopard Survey of nation was developed by scientific experts. The use of technology such as camera traps & scientific surveys will help to estimate the numbers on International Snow Leopard Day (23rd October 2019).
- The occasion also marked the inaugural session of 4th steering meeting of **Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection**.
- **Bishkek declaration** of 2013 reiterates the fundamental principles, objectives & actions pertaining to participatory conservation of snow leopards & their ecosystems of Asia.
- The **first Snow Leopard Conservation Centre** is decided to be established in **Uttarakhand** with the **funding of Global Environment Facility (GEF)**.
- **Securing Livelihoods, Conservation, Sustainable Use and Restoration of High Range Himalayan Ecosystems project** (SECURE Himalaya), a project developed as a response to the growing crisis of illegal trafficking in wildlife, will also contribute towards attainment of the aim of Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP).

- Snow Leopard has been declared as the **State animal of Ladakh** Union Territory. It is also the state animal of **Himachal Pradesh**.

News: Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has revamped its Swadesh Darshan scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD 2.0) with an aim to develop sustainable and responsible infrastructure at destinations.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- Swadesh Darshan, a **Central Sector Scheme**, was launched in 2014 -15 for **integrated development of theme based tourist circuits** in the country.
- Under the scheme, the **Ministry of Tourism** provides **Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations** for infrastructure development of circuits.
- This scheme is envisioned to **synergize with other schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, and Make in India etc.** with the idea of positioning the **tourism sector as a major engine for job creation**, driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realize its potential.

- Fifteen thematic tourist circuits have been identified by the government for development under the Swadesh Darshan scheme namely: North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit and Heritage Circuit.
- The projects for development under this scheme are identified in consultation with state governments and union territory administrations and are sanctioned subject to submission of detailed project reports and their adherence to scheme guidelines, availability of funds and submission of utilization certificates for funds released earlier.