

GEOGRAPHY

Bengal port records country's highest sea level rise in 50 years

Of the major ports in India, Diamond Harbour in West Bengal located at the mouth of river Hooghly has recorded the maximum sea level increase.

Freaky rise in Sea Levels

- Going by the data from the Ministry of Earth Sciences, four ports — Diamond Harbour, Kandla, Haldia and Port Blair — recorded a higher sea level rise than the global average.
- Chennai and Mumbai, recorded a sea level rise far below the global and the national averages at 0.33 mm per year (1916-2005) and 0.74 mm (1878-2005) respectively.
- Sea level rise in the country has been estimated to be 1.3 mm/year along India's coasts during the last 40-50 years, at Diamond Harbour the rise was almost five times higher at 5.16 mm per year.
- The mean sea level rise for Diamond Harbour was based on recordings over the period from 1948 to 2005.
- This is followed by Kandla port in Gujarat where the sea level rise was 3.18 (1950 to 2005) , followed by Haldia in West Bengal, which recorded a sea level rise of 2.89 mm a year (1972 to 2005).
- Port Blair also recorded a sea level rise of 2.20 mm per year (1916-1964).

Why rise in sea level?

- Sea level rise is said be linked with global warming and as per the fifth assessment report of the International Panel on Climate Change.
- The global sea level was rising at an average rate of 1.8 mm per year over the last century.
- Global warming not only causes melting of ice and glaciers, but also leads to internal expansion of water in oceans and thus a rise in the sea level.
- Heavy rainfall and temperature extremes like heat waves and shifts in semi-arid regions were some of the recent findings which may have linkages with climate change and global warming.
- Studies over Indian region have shown a warming trend of 0.6°C on all India average basis, mainly contributed by maximum temperatures.
- The sea level rise is higher in West Bengal, particularly in the Sunderbans delta is because of the deltaic sediment deposition as a result of the mixing of fresh water and saline water, according to experts.

Threats

- Rising sea levels can exacerbate the impacts of coastal hazards such as storm surge, tsunami, coastal floods, high waves and coastal erosion in the low lying coastal areas.
- In addition it causes gradual loss of coastal land to sea.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

Human Rights Courts in India

The Supreme Court has sought a response from the Central government, the States and the UTs on the prolonged delay for over a quarter of a century to establish exclusive human rights courts in each district and appointing special public prosecutors in them.

HR Courts

- The Human Rights Act had called for the establishment of special courts in each district to conduct speedy trial of offences arising out of violation and abuse of human rights.
- Section 30 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 envisages that a State government, with the concurrence of the CJ of High Court should specify for each district a court of session as a court of human rights for the speedy trial of violation of rights.
- Section 31 of the Act provides the State government to specify and appoint a special public prosecutor in that court.
- Sessions Court of the district concerned is considered as the Human Rights Court.
- Under the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 a Sessions Judge cannot take cognizance of the offence. He can only try the cases committed to him by the magistrate under Section 193 of the Cr.P.C.

Why need HR courts?

- To uphold and protect the basic and fundamental rights of an individual it is an indispensable obligation upon the State to provide affordable, effective and speedy trial of offences related to violation of human rights which can only be achieved by setting up special courts in each district as provided under the Act.

- The recent India Human Rights Report 2018, which was published by the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018 by US provide a deep reality into the sad state of affairs in India.
- The report threw light on various rights violations such as police brutality, torture and excess custodial and encounters deaths, horrible conditions in prisons and detention centres, arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention, denial of fair public trial, the petition said.

HR Violations in India

- From 2001 to 2010, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recorded that 14,231 i.e. 4.33 persons died in police and judicial custody in the country.
- This includes 1,504 deaths in police custody and 12,727 deaths in judicial custody from 2001-2002 to 2009-2010.
- A large majority of these deaths being a direct consequence of torture in custody.

Single Tribunal for water disputes

The Union Cabinet has approved the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- The Bill seeks to amend the Inter State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 to streamline the adjudication of inter-state river water disputes.
- A key feature of the bill is the constitution of a single tribunal with different Benches, and the setting of strict timelines for adjudication.
- It will help adjudicate disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers and river valleys.
- A version of this bill was first introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2017 but subsequently lapsed.

Why need a single tribunal?

- Any State Government may request under the 1956 Act for any water dispute on the inter-State rivers.
- When the Central government is of the opinion that the dispute cannot be settled by negotiations it constitutes a Water Disputes Tribunal for the adjudication.
- There are about a dozen tribunals that now exist to resolve disputes among States on sharing water from rivers common to them.
- The standalone tribunal so envisaged will have a permanent establishment and permanent office space and infrastructure so as to obviate with the need to set up a separate Tribunal for each water dispute, a time consuming process.

Dispute Resolution Committee

- The Bill also proposes a Dispute Resolution Committee set up by the Central Government for amicably resolving inter-State water disputes within 18 months.
- Any dispute that cannot be settled by negotiations would be referred to the tribunal for its adjudication.
- The dispute so referred to the tribunal shall be assigned by the chairperson of the tribunal to a Bench of the tribunal for adjudication.
- The Bill can also affect the composition of the members of various tribunals, and has a provision to have a technical expert as the head of the tribunal.
- Currently all tribunals are staffed by members of the judiciary, nominated by the Chief Justice.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Witness Protection Scheme

Minister of State for Home Affairs informed about the scheme in a written reply to question in the Rajya Sabha.

Witness Protection Scheme

- Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 provides for protection of witnesses based on the threat assessment and protection measures.
- It includes protection/change of identity of witnesses, their relocation, installation of security devices at the residence of witnesses, usage of specially designed Court rooms, etc.
- As per Article 141/142 of the Constitution, the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018 endorsed in the said Judgment of the Supreme Court is binding on all Courts within the territory of India and enforceable in all States and Union Territories.

Other Provisions of the scheme

- Witness Protection Fund means the fund created for bearing the expenses incurred during the implementation of Witness Protection Order passed by the Competent Authority under this scheme;

- Witness Protection Order means an order passed by the Competent Authority detailing the steps to be taken for ensuring the safety of witness from threats to his or his family member's life, reputation or property. It also includes interim order, if any passed, during the pendency of Witness Protection Application;
- Witness Protection Cell means a dedicated Cell of State/UT Police or Central Police Agencies assigned the duty to implement the witness protection order. It shall be responsible for the security as per witness protection order.

Proposed Rights to be entitled to the Witness

- Right to give evidence anonymously
- Right to protection from intimidation and harm
- Right to be treated with dignity and compassion and respect of privacy
- Right to information of the status of the investigation and prosecution of the crime
- Right to secure waiting place while at Court proceedings
- Right to transportation and lodging arrangements

About Witness Protection Fund

- The Scheme provides for a State Witness Protection Fund for meeting the expenses of the scheme.
- This fund shall be operated by the Department/Ministry of Home under State/UT Government and shall comprise of the following:
- Budgetary allocation made in the Annual Budget by the State Government;
- Receipt of amount of costs imposed/ ordered to be deposited by the courts/tribunals in the Witness Protection Fund;
- Donations/ contributions from Philanthropist/ Charitable Institutions/ Organizations and individuals permitted by the Government.
- Funds contributed under Corporate Social Responsibility.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Desert Locusts incursion in India

Recently Agriculture Minister has informed in Parliament that since May 21, there has been an incursion of desert locusts in Rajasthan and Gujarat from areas bordering Pakistan. Neither the desert locust control teams nor any state agriculture functionaries have reported any damage to the crops.

Locusts

- Locusts are certain species of short-horned grasshoppers that have a swarming phase.
- Swarming refers to a collective behaviour in which locusts aggregate together just like flocks of birds.
- These insects are usually solitary, but under certain circumstances they become more abundant and change their behaviour and habits, becoming grouped.
- They form bands of wingless nymphs which later become swarms of winged adults.
- Both the bands and the swarms move around and rapidly strip fields and cause damage to crops.
- The adults are powerful fliers; they can travel great distances, consuming most of the green vegetation wherever the swarm settles.

Havoc created by locusts

- Locust swarms devastate crops and cause major agricultural damage and attendant human misery—famine and starvation.
- They occur in many parts of the world, but today locusts are most destructive in sustenance farming regions of Africa.
- The desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) is notorious. Found in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, they inhabit some 60 countries and can cover one-fifth of Earth's land surface.
- Desert locust plagues may threaten the economic livelihood of one-tenth of the world's humans.

Control measures in India

- India has a Locust Control and Research scheme that is being implemented through the Locust Warning Organisation (LWO), established in 1939.
- It was amalgamated in 1946 with the Directorate of Plant Protection Quarantine and Storage (PPQS) of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The LWO's responsibility is monitoring and control of the locust situation in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and partly in Punjab and Haryana.
- The LWO publishes a fortnightly bulletin on the locust situation.

- The latest bulletin on the PPQS website, for the second fortnight of June, said control operations had covered 5,551 hectares by June 30.

EDITORIALS**The malaise of malnutrition**

A new report, 'Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019', authored by the Government of India and the United Nations World Food Programme, has been released.

Questions raised?

- Why despite rapid economic growth, declining levels of poverty, enough food to export, and a multiplicity of government programmes, malnutrition amongst the poorest remains high?

Key findings:

- The poorest sections of society caught in a trap of poverty and malnutrition, which is being passed on from generation to generation.
- Mothers who are hungry and malnourished produce children who are stunted, underweight and unlikely to develop to achieve their full human potential.
- The effects of malnourishment in a small child are not merely physical. Undernutrition can affect cognitive development by causing direct structural damage to the brain and by impairing infant motor development. This in turn affects the child's ability to learn at school, leading to a lifetime of poverty and lack of opportunity.

Concerns :

- The report highlights the failure of the Indian state to ensure that its most vulnerable citizens are provided adequate nutrition in their early years.
- India has long been home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world.

Efforts by government in this regard and challenges ahead:

- The government's National Nutrition Mission (renamed as Poshan Abhiyaan) aims to reduce stunting (a measure of malnutrition that is defined as height that is significantly below the norm for age) by 2% a year, bringing down the proportion of stunted children in the population to 25% by 2022.
- But even this modest target will require doubling the current annual rate of reduction in stunting.
- A year after it was launched, State and Union Territory governments have only used 16% of the funds allocated to them.
- Anganwadis are key to the distribution of services to mothers and children. But many States, including Bihar and Odisha, which have large vulnerable populations, are struggling to set up functioning anganwadis, and recruit staff.

Key areas that need immediate attention:

- The key to ending the tragedy of child nutrition lies with a handful of State governments: the highest levels of stunted and underweight children are found in Jharkand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Malnutrition is a reflection of age-old patterns of social and economic exclusion. Over 40% of children from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are stunted. Close to 40% of children from the Other Backward Classes are stunted. The lack of nutrition in their childhood years can reduce their mental as well as physical development and condemn them to a life in the margins of society.
- Stunting and malnourishment starts not with the child, but with the mother. An adolescent girl who is malnourished and anaemic tends to be a mother who is malnourished and anaemic. This in turn increased the chances of her child being stunted.

Way ahead:

- In terms of immediate actions that can yield quick results, four priorities for the child would be the initiation of breastfeeding within one hour after birth, exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life, introduction of appropriate complementary foods after six months, and bi-annual vitamin A supplementation with deworming for children under five.
- To realize the potential of demographic dividend, India must ensure that its children grow healthily. Economic growth of 9% can not guarantee good health to the citizens if the state do not take pains to redistribute wealth properly to make India a safer place for its children to grow with dignity.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Examine the reasons behind persistence of malnutrition in India and steps taken by government in this regard?

Ans: India is home to over 40 million stunted and 17 million wasted children (under-five years). Despite a marked trend of improvement in a variety of anthropometric measures of nutrition over the last 10 years, child under-nutrition rates persist as among the highest in the world. Also by 2025, India will have over 17 million obese children and stand second among 184 countries.

The reasons behind persistence of malnutrition in India –

- Poverty: Low income constrains households' ability to feed children food with a high and balanced micro-nutrient content as such food items, i.e. animal products, fruits and vegetables are invariably more expensive than staple grains.
- Female illiteracy: Illiterate mothers are in a disadvantaged position to acquire and apply knowledge about appropriate health-care and feeding practices. Uneducated women are likely to be less able to care well for themselves in terms of nutrition and health.
- Inefficient and ineffective implementation of, and huge leakage in, government's schemes meant to overcome hunger and malnutrition.
- Low level of awareness about 'dos and don'ts' of balanced food, health and hygiene as well as about accessing entitlements and rights under the government's schemes/resources and services compounds the problem.
- Centralisation of governance, resources, decision-making, and development action as well as concentration of productive assets, resources and wealth in a few hands further aggravates the problem.
- Lack of disaggregated data of district level and below up to Gram Panchayat level comes in the way of focused measures and efficient and effective monitoring, mapping and surveillance system.
- Lack of adequate political and social will is yet another cause

Some of steps taken by government –

- National Nutrition Mission (NNM): It has introduced a central nodal agency with extensive financial resources to coordinate various central and state government schemes and imbue them with additional financial resources. The total outlay for the nutrition mission has been set at over Rs. 9,000 crore for a period of three years. The core strategy of the mission is to create decentralized governance system with flexibility given to states, districts and local level with robust monitoring, accountability and incentive frameworks that will encourage local solutions. The programme, through well-defined targets, strives to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. More than 10 crore people are likely to be benefitted by this programme.
- National Health Policy 2017: Improve health status through concerted policy action in all sectors and expand preventive, promotive, curative, palliative and rehabilitative services provided through the public health sector with focus on quality.
- National Food Security Act 2013: It specially mentions the need for nutritional security. An Act to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-day meal scheme: It was aimed at providing food supplements to children from poor and marginalized sections to bridge the gap between requirement and actual dietary intake. Another component of ICDS programme was weighing children for early detection of growth faltering and under-nutrition and initiating appropriate management of under-nourished children.

Way forward

Some of the approaches that should be focus of all the policies and programmes:

- Decentralized Approach to Tackling Nutrition
- Strengthen and restructure ICDS, and leverage PDS
- Extend coverage of food fortification of staples
- Target multiple contributing factors, for example, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)
- Align agricultural policy with national nutritional objectives
- Boost private sector engagement in nutrition interventions

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Which of the following phenomenon cause rise in Sea Level ?
 1. Heat Waves
 2. Deltaic sediment deposition
 Select the correct answer using codes given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 Only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Consider the following statements w.r.t the Human Rights Courts in India.
 1. The Human Rights Act provides for these courts.
 2. Sessions Court of the district concerned is considered as the Human Rights Court.
 Select the correct answer using codes given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 Only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following statements w.r.t Inter-State River Water Disputes.
 1. Article 262 of the constitution empowers the state legislatures to make laws for the adjudication of inter-state water dispute.
 2. The Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956 was enacted to deal with inter-state water disputes.
 3. The Government of India can constitute a tribunal to hear the disputes concerning claims of water sharing.
 4. The members of tribunal are appointed by the Chief justices of India.
 Which of the statement given is / are correct?
 - (a) 1, 3 and 4
 - (b) 1, 2 and 3
 - (c) **2, 3 and 4**
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
4. Which of the following Inter-State water disputes tribunals is not correct?
 - (a) Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (1969-1976).
 - (b) Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (1969-1979).
 - (c) **Tung Bhadra Water Dispute Tribunal (1979-1984).**
 - (d) Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (1990-2007).
5. Which of the following is incorrect w.r.t the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019?
 - (a) It was introduced in 2017 but subsequently lapsed.
 - (b) It provides for the constitution of a single tribunal with different Benches
 - (c) It proposes for a Dispute Resolution Committee
 - (d) **None of the above**
6. Which of the following rights are given to the witnesses in the Witness Protection Scheme?
 1. Right to information of the status of the investigation and prosecution of the crime
 2. Right to secure waiting place while at Court proceedings
 3. Right to transportation and lodging arrangements
 Select the correct answer from the codes given below
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) **1, 2 and 3**
7. Consider the following statement w.r.t Desert Locusts which was recently in the news.
 1. Desert Locusts are a species of Caterpillar.
 2. Although present in the field, they do not contribute in crop destruction.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2