



Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 2:

➤ Governance & Social Justice:

1. Supply foodgrains to all school students: panel
2. What is a Mid-Day Meal scheme?

➤ International Relations:

1. China reaches accord with India on LAC spat
2. 'China disregarding historic commitments on Naku La'

PAPER 3:

➤ Environment & Biodiversity:

1. Gujarat's pride grows as it now hosts 674 Gir lions
2. What is Lion Conservation Project?



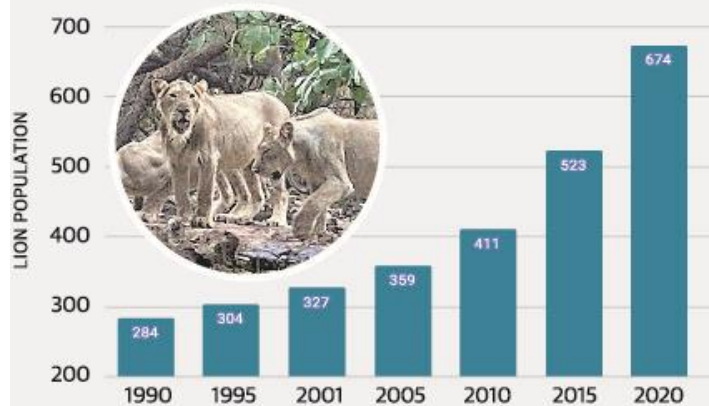
Gujarat's pride grows as it now hosts 674 Gir lions

Key Points:

- Gujarat prides itself on hosting Asiatic lions exclusively, and their numbers have now risen to an estimated 674 in the Gir forest region and other revenue areas of coastal Saurashtra.
- Once seen as threatened by extinction, the lion population has grown by almost 29% from the last count in 2015.
- Today, Asiatic lions are present in Protected Areas and agro-pastoral landscapes of Saurashtra covering nine districts, over an expanse of about 30,000 sq. km.
- The State Forest Department says the population is 674 including males, females and cubs.
- During 2015, the baseline was 523 lions. Moreover, the distribution of the lions expanded from 22,000 sq. km in 2015 to 30,000 sq. km in 2020.

More the merrier

The number of Asiatic lions in Gir forest in Gujarat has increased by nearly 30% between 2015 and 2020, the highest rise between two census years



Strategies and interventions:

- The department had implemented strategies and interventions like community participation, use of technology, habitat management and increase in prey base, human-lion conflict mitigation and healthcare including import of vaccines after some lions were infected with **Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)**.

Value Added Information

What is Lion Conservation Project?

- The Centre and the Gujarat government have announced a Rs. 97.85 crore *Asiatic Lion Conservation Project* in 2019.

Key features of the project:

- **Key aspects of the conservation project include** undertaking “habitat improvement” measures, making more sources of water available, creating a wildlife crime cell, and a task force for the Greater Gir region. ‘Greater Gir’ that includes, other than the existing Gir National Park, sanctuaries in Girnar, Pania and Mitiyala.



- It would also *involve having in place a GPS-based tracking system*, which would look at surveillance tracking, animal and vehicle tracking. There would also be an automated sensor grid that would have magnetic sensors, movement sensors and infra-red heat sensors.
- *A key outcome of the project is to have a dedicated veterinary institute, lion ambulances and back-up stocks of vaccines* that may be required.

Relocation of lions:

- The *Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was identified to be the most suitable for reintroducing the species*, according to a Supreme Court-appointed technical expert committee, but there has been no progress on the proposal.
- There is a committee of experts from both States examining the suitability of Madhya Pradesh as a potential lion reserve.
- *The SC in April 2013 had ordered the translocation of some lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh within six months*, but this hasn't happened. This was ordered after several recommendations by expert groups, including the Wildlife Institute of India.
- It emphasised that the long-term survival of the lion as a species was best served if they could be present outside Gujarat, too, so that they are protected against, say, a forest fire, a disease, or calamities.

Facts for Prelims:

- Asiatic Lions are listed as 'Endangered' under the IUCN Red List.
- Its population is restricted to the state of Gujarat in India.
- With serious conservation efforts of the State and the Union Government, the population of Asiatic lions have increased to over 500 which used to be around 50 by late 1890s.
- As per the 2015 census, there were a total of 523 Asiatic Lions in Gir Protected Area Network.

China reaches accord with India on LAC spat

Key Points:

- China said it had "reached agreement" with India on the ongoing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), a day after India announced troops from both sides had begun a "partial disengagement" from some of the stand-off points.



- India and China held Major General-level talks to discuss further de-escalation at several stand-off points in Eastern Ladakh including Patrolling Point (PP) 14, following a broad accord reached on Saturday in talks held at the Corps Commander-level.



- As per the agreement, a series of ground-level talks would be held over the next 10 days, with four other points of conflict identified at PP15, PP17, Chushul and the north bank of Pangong Lake.

Supply foodgrains to all school students: panel

- The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has said all students studying in State schools who are eligible for the **mid-day meal scheme** should be provided the foodgrains at their homes till schools reopen.
- Many students who belonged to backward sections depended on the mid-day meal for their survival.

Value Added Information

What is a Mid-Day Meal scheme?

- The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 1995.
- It aims to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children.
- The MDM Scheme comes under the Ministry of HRD.
- The scheme provides that every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enrolls and attends the school, shall be provided hot cooked meal having nutritional standards of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary (I- V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class), free of charge every day except on school holidays.
- The scheme covers all government and government aided schools and also Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**.



'China disregarding historic commitments on Naku La'

Key Points:

- The skirmishes and the stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops at Naku La in Sikkim last month, in an area of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that is considered settled, may be Beijing's way of attempting a new claim, said defence sources, highlighting the historic **Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890** as proof of India's ownership of the territory.
- Referring to a major scuffle that took place at Naku La on May 9, the sources said it was unusual for Chinese troops to open up a part of the LAC that has not been in contention before.
- According to the Convention, the boundary in the area is based on the watershed principles.
- Its Article 1 states, "The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. ...follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal Territory."
- The Gazetteer of Sikkim in 1894, while describing the physical features of Sikkim, also mentions the boundary that runs along Naku la - Chorten Nyima La.

Undemarcated boundary

- Although meetings between former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in 2003 and maps exchanged subsequently indicated that India recognised the Tibetan Autonomous Region as a part of China, and Beijing recognised Sikkim as a State of the Indian Union, the boundary at Sikkim while undisputed, remains undemarcated on the ground.
- In 2017, after the Doklam stand-off near the India-Bhutan-China trijunction, then Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee that "there are still steps to be covered before the boundary is finalised."
- He said India accepted the 1890 treaty as "the basis for alignment", but the treaty had only been "partially implemented on the ground". "Certainly the segments India is talking about, the Batang La segment, etc. was not there and there is nothing to show that that was actually delineated or demarcated or agreed upon."