



## Current Affairs of the Day

### GS Paper - I

- How global warming might affect food security

### GS Paper - II

- '76% of rural Indians can't afford nutritious diet'
- New Zealand PM Ardern wins historic re-election
- A work-in-progress campaign for rights

### GS Paper - III

- Protecting pachyderm pathways
- Knowledge systems But where are the people? Sunday magazine

## '76% of rural Indians can't afford nutritious diet'

### GS II: Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger.

**Bottom Line:** Three out of four rural Indians cannot afford a nutritious diet, according to a paper recently published in the journal Food Policy. Even if they spent their entire income on food, almost two out of three of them would not have the money to pay for the cheapest possible diet that meets the requirements set by the government's premier nutrition body.



**Ideal Diet:** The National Institute for Nutrition's guidelines for a nutritionally adequate diet call for adult women to eat 330 gm of cereals and 75 gm of pulses a day, along with 300 gm of dairy, 100 gm of fruit, and 300 gm of vegetables, which should include at least 100 gm of dark green leafy vegetables.

### Findings

1. The paper titled "Affordability of nutritious diets in rural India".
2. The study uses the wages of unskilled workers who make up a larger proportion of the population than industrial workers and includes items such as dairy, fruit and dark green leafy vegetables that are essential as per India's official dietary guidelines.
3. Even if they spent all their income on food, 63.3% of the rural population or more than 52 crore Indians would not be able to afford that nutritious meal. These numbers are somewhat speculative, but they do reveal the scale of the dietary affordability problem in rural India: nutritious diets are too expensive, and incomes far too low.
4. The study uses the latest available food price and wage information from the National Sample Survey's 2011 dataset.
5. The findings are significant in the light of the fact that India performs abysmally on many nutrition indicators even while the country claims to have achieved food security.



6. The Global Hunger Index 2020 showed that India has the world's highest prevalence of child wasting, reflecting acute undernutrition. On indicators that simply measure calorie intake, India performs relatively better, but they do not account for the nutrition value of those calories.

### Key question:

1. Difference between food and nutrition security
2. If India has achieved food security as it claims what stops it from achieving nutrition security

## New Zealand PM Ardern wins historic re-election

### GS II: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern delivered the biggest election victory for her centre-left Labour Party in half a century on Saturday as voters rewarded her for a decisive response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The mandate means Ms Ardern, 40, could form the first single-party government in decades. Labour



was on track to win 64 of the 120 seats in the country's unicameral Parliament, the highest by any party since New Zealand adopted a proportional voting system in 1996.

Ms Ardern, 40, won the top job after the 2017 election when Labour formed an alliance with two other parties. The following year, she became only the second world leader to give birth while in office.

Ms Ardern promised supporters she would build an economy that works for everyone, create jobs, train people, protect the environment and address climate challenges and social inequalities.

### Role model

She became a role model for working mothers around the world, many of whom saw her as a counterpoint to President Donald Trump. She is considered an

empathetic leader. And she was praised for her handling of last year's attack on two Christchurch mosques when a white supremacist gunned down 51 Muslim worshippers. She moved quickly to pass new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons. Her management of COVID-19 also brought success to her.

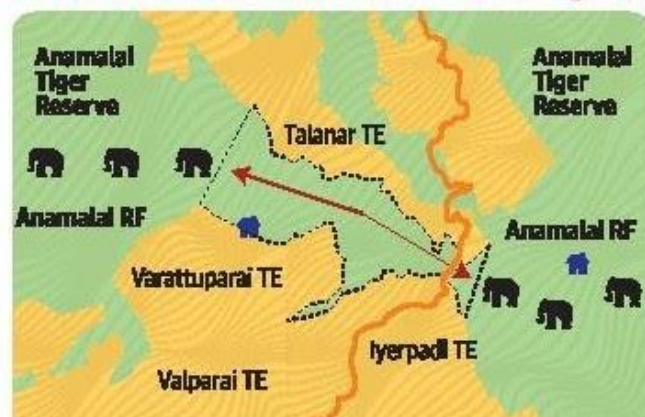
Importance: Low number of Women in politics is a persistent issue in India. There is a debate around climate change denying male leaders like Trump and Bolsonaro vs female leaders like Merkel and Arden. Females are considered more sympathetic to climate cause, migrants, violence and terrorism. For instance, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) in the USA sponsored the New Green Deal which combines Roosevelt's economic approach with modern ideas such as renewable energy and resource efficiency or the Fridays for Future movement of Greta Thunberg.

## Protecting pachyderm pathways

### GS III: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Main argument: Elephant corridors are crucial for the survival of giant Nomads who are habitual commuters between distinct habitats for their survival.

#### Anaimalai: Siluvaimedu - Kadamparai



#### Highlights

1. Forest cover is shrinking in this scenario corridors become important for this large nomad
2. Supreme explained earlier, Elephant is keystone species. Their nomadic behaviour is immensely important to the environment. Herds of roaming elephants are landscape artists, they facilitate seed dispersal, provide nutrients to plants and animals, are part of the forest food web and they have an umbrella effect.



3. Also, elephants are genetically coded to breed outside their birth family thus they need to move beyond.
4. Strong political will is required to conserve pathways for Elephants across various states.
5. India's efforts to curb human-elephant conflict (HEC) remain inadequate without these corridors.
6. It's not just the pachyderms that are affected by HEC. Officials say more than 500 people and 100 elephants die each year due to conflict — crop-raiding, unruly behaviour because of habitat loss, etc. Safe corridors can help in this.

## Background

Efforts to address this have been taken. As far back as 1992, the government initiated Project Elephant to facilitate conservation. And, exactly 10 years ago this month, an Elephant Task Force (ETF) was appointed to review conservation efforts. The ETF came out with a report (Gajah — Securing the Future for Elephants in India) full of recommendations, including landscape management to preserve habitats, elephant-specific environmental impact assessments, and establishment of conflict management task forces. It also laid out how India could take the global lead in elephant conservation and facilitate international cooperation.

But, as thorough as these suggestions were, they remain largely unimplemented. The only notable steps taken were the designation of the elephant as a National Heritage Animal.

## Way Forward

1. Implement report of the ETF
2. Secure Elephant Corridors

## Conclusion

Clearly, a lot more can, and should, be done. Piecemeal initiatives will make little difference; the government must establish a focussed and full-fledged movement to save our elephants. India cannot fail Gajah. The latter's survival and ecological security are linked to our own.



## How global warming might affect Food Security

**GS I: Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc., geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.**



### **GS II: Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger.**

**Context:** Between the year 1870 (the first industrial revolution) and today, the global temperature has risen by almost 1.2 degrees Celsius. This has come about due to more fossil burning (oil, natural gas, coal), which has also increased the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels from 280 ppm to 400 ppm. This heating has caused glaciers to melt and the sea level to rise. There are changes in the Ocean and land-based production system that threaten global food security.

#### **Ocean acidification**

The rise in CO<sub>2</sub> levels has also acidified the ocean, leading to weakening the shells and skeletons of animals living in the sea like Corals. Corals themselves are known as the rainforest of the sea providing habitat to 25% of marine Biodiversity. Which is a great source of food security.

On land, the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> levels has both positive and negative effects. This being a 'GreenHouse Gas', it traps the Sun's heat from the atmosphere and warms the temperature, aids in the photosynthesis of plants, making them grow more, but at the same time restricts the plant's ability to absorb nitrogen, thus restricting crop growth.

The higher temperatures during the 'growing season' in the tropics and subtropical regions (India and our neighbours, Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South America) will greatly affect crop productivity, and that this would be the 'norm'. Given this double whammy of affecting ocean life and land-based crops, global food security is under threat.

## A work-in-progress campaign for rights

### GS II: Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate.

#### Background about UNHRC

The UNHRC replaced the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2006 after a vast majority of the UN members endorsed a proposal to create a new institution to promote and protect rights as the old structure faced “credibility deficit”. The council is seen as a central structure in the global human rights architecture, a political body with representatives drawn from the General Assembly.



The Geneva-based council has 47 members serving at any time with elections held to fill up seats every year, based on allocations to regions to ensure geographical representation. It passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues, besides overseeing the expert investigation of violations in specific countries.

Apart from the council, the UN has also set up a number of treaty-based organisations to monitor compliance with human rights standards and international human rights treaties such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

#### Two key function

1. The council passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues through a Universal periodic review of all 193 UN member states
2. It also oversees the expert investigation of violations in specific countries
3. Human rights breaches that are investigated by the UNHRC across UN member states relate to themes such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women’s rights, LGBT rights and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.



## Plus Points

1. At one level, the UNHCR's structure — drawing a group of nations from the General Assembly through rotation and election via a “one state, one vote” principle — has allowed the organisation to be fairly representative of the General Assembly without special privileges for the more developed Western countries, as is the case with other multilateral institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank.
2. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which has a national report from the state under review plus a compilation of UN information prepared by the Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, also allows for a summary of information from civil society actors.
3. Countries such as Israel, Syria, Iran, North Korea, Myanmar, Sudan, Cambodia, Belarus, Burundi and Eritrea have been investigated and strongly condemned by the UNHRC for violating various human rights.
4. Sri Lanka, for example, had, in a co-sponsored resolution in 2015, provided commitments to the council to promote reconciliation, accountability and human rights, following the end of the civil war in 2009. The Gotabaya Rajapaksa-led government withdrew the country from those commitments earlier this year.
5. In a unanimously passed resolution that was sponsored by African states, the UNHRC in June 2020, ordered a report on “systematic racism” against people of African descent following the murder of the African-American George Floyd in the U.S. India has not been spared from scrutiny either.
6. The unique arrangement of representation, review and collaboration (with civil society groups over and above nation-states) has certainly improved the functioning of the UNHRC in comparison with its predecessor Commission. But the challenges remain high. The UNHCR is still a work in progress.

## Issues

1. There has always been an inherent tension between countries from the West that espouse an individualist notion of human rights that lays emphasis on political and civic rights and those from the developing world who have laid greater emphasis on socio-economic and cultural rights (such as Cuba).





Between these “extremities”, there are other rising powers such as Brazil and India who have committed to holding states to account for human rights issues.

2. The record of some member-states such as Saudi, China and Russia in the council has also not lived up to the aims and mission of the UNHRC, which has led to critics questioning its relevance.
3. Powerful countries such as the U.S. have refused to participate in the Council, with the Trump administration taking the country out of the Council in 2018, years after it was reinstated under President Barack Obama.
4. Also, what makes the Council’s composition problematic is that several of its members run afoul of its proclaimed aims (for example, the one-party systems of China and Cuba that have a controversial record on freedom of expression or the anti-gay policies of Russia).

## But where are the people?

### GS III: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**CruX:** The Peoples’ Biodiversity Register (PBR) was meant to become the ultimate tool for a people-centric environment impact assessment process. But local communities are being excluded from the exercise altogether. The task of creating PBR is being outsourced to NGOs and universities in many states and experts of Botany are taking place of local people.



### Benefits of Local Knowledge of biodiversity

1. Conservation of forest plants, traditional medicine knowledge leading to health and livelihood, this going on for generations
2. Legal recognition in the form of PBR gives people confidence, legal protection to local wisdom and way for benefit sharing out of local wisdom.
3. Example camel herders know 36 varieties camel eat, many of them have medicinal values which herders have identified and are part of their traditional knowledge.

4. Indeed, the only way communities can use these PBRs to control their natural resources; prevent (or get a fair price from) industries coming in to exploit these resources, and contribute overall to conservation is to increase their participation in the process.

### The recognition

Before the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) was passed in 2002, there was no formal recognition of the knowledge that local communities possessed. The 'discovery' of flora and fauna was either the prerogative of the colonial explorer or the modern scientist with a university degree. The traditional knowledge of millions of forest dwellers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and hunting communities about the biodiversity in their backyards was never considered to be on a par with formal research. And if a private company wanted to exploit these natural resources, they were not required to pay the communities that had known about and nurtured them for centuries.

### Sharing benefits

The pathbreaking Act not only supports the conservation and the sustainable use of biological resources, it also promotes an equitable sharing of benefits that come from their use.

This law has the potential to revolutionise the rights of communities over the natural resources they live with. The BDA has made it mandatory for every local self-governing institution in rural and urban areas to constitute a Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) within their area of jurisdiction. Once constituted, the BMC must prepare a Peoples' Biodiversity Register (PBR) in consultation with local people. A PBR comprehensively documents traditional knowledge of local biological resources. The BMC is the custodian of these resources, and any industry that extracts biological resources from these areas has to share part of its revenue with the local community.

### Implementation deficit and NGT order

1. By 2016, only 9,700 BMCs had been set up for the 2,70,573 local bodies across the country; compliance was thus a mere 3.58%. And just 1,388 PBRs were completed that year.



2. The NGT directed 100% compliance in the constitution of BMCs and in the creation of PBRs by January 31, 2020.
3. That was the game-changer. States began work at a frenetic pace. Today, eight months after the NGT deadline, some 1,90,950 PBRs have been completed or are in various stages of preparation, representing 70% of the country's PBR coverage.
4. While the NGT order was quantitative, the quality of the process depended on the people's participation is necessary.

## Issues

1. With the lack of funds and a large number of local bodies, the task of setting up BMCs and creating PBRs is an unwieldy exercise.
2. So the BMCs were initially formed using the manpower of the State Forest Department. Forest guards were roped in and trained. Then, to record biodiversity, technical experts who specialised in agriculture, botany, animal husbandry and urban biodiversity were brought in.
3. In many states, a local NGO was involved in setting up BMCs and preparing PBR. The role of local people has been restricted to that of helping researchers in data collection. And this is not in sync with NBA's guidelines on PBRs. A PBR is more than just a compilation of species. The preparation of PBRs by consultants defeats the whole purpose of having this register. Local people are central to the process; the task cannot be outsourced to a third party.
4. Besides this, there are also some communities glaringly missing from the process altogether. Nomadic pastoralists, for instance, and the livestock breeds they have created over centuries. Moving around in the spaces between villages, they are major producers of food without cultivation, while at the same time they conserve and add value to biodiversity. Being nomadic, they are crucial for biodiversity conservation, yet they fall outside the scope of the village BMCs, even of State biodiversity boards.
5. Ecologist and scholar Madhav Gadgil laments the lack of community participation and the fact that the PBR is still not being used as a people's tool.



## Good Examples

1. Look at the instances where handing over control of natural resources to the people has reaped big rewards. The Uttarakhand State Biodiversity Board issued notices to nearly 600 industries — including Dabur and its rival Baba Ramdev's Patanjali — for using natural resources in the hill State without adequately compensating the communities.
2. In Kerala, the Eraviperoor Biodiversity Management Committee rejuvenated a tributary of the River Pampa, successfully recovering 13.5 acres of the riverbank. It has also done exemplary work in plastic waste management.
3. The BMC in Raipassa village in Tripura has signed an agreement with companies for harvesting broom grass and making sure that the funds are transferred back to the community.

## The big question of Environment Impact Assessment

A critical question comes up: Will the NGOs and consultants who helped prepare the biodiversity registers and committees join hands with the communities when it comes to fighting the bigger battles, such as those against mining companies coming in to acquire land or a new dam that submerges their forests. Local knowledge is part of their inheritance when it comes in danger their resistance will be supreme. Universities and consultants may not be willing to go that far.

This is where the true litmus test of the power of the PBRs lies. It has the scope to become the ultimate tool for a people-centric environment impact assessment process that allows communities living next to the resource to remain the real commanders. If implemented with the right degree of people's participation, the PBRs could indeed become a trailblazer on the road to environmental democracy.

## Way Forward

1. Involve local people in PBR exercise as mandated, create awareness and empower them.
2. Create a dashboard to monitor implementation and for grievance redressal of the local community.
3. Invite local community groups to complete PBR.

## DAWP (Daily Answer Writing Practice) 18/10/2020

### GS II

**Q1.** Though *the United Nations Human Rights Council* is a big improvement over the erstwhile *UN Commission on Human Rights*, it still faces credibility issues and challenges. Explain.

### GS2/GS3

**Q2.** “Nutrition Deficiency poses the greatest challenge to the demographic dividend of India”. Elaborate upon this in the light of the recent Global Hunger Index report?

### GS3

**Q3.** “The Peoples’ Biodiversity Register PBRs have the scope to become the ultimate tool for a people-centric environment impact assessment process and development.” In this light find the deficiencies in the implementation of Biodiversity act 2020.

### GS4

**Q4.** “We are living in an increasingly polarised world. A place where more and more have lost the ability to see one another’s point of view.” Elucidate in the light of burgeoning global challenges that call for solidarity.