



Current Affairs of the Day

Omicron: India will not get African Cheetahs this year

1. Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh was all prepped to welcome the African cheetahs — a project that has been a decade in the making — this year. The project has now been postponed, as the new coronavirus variant of concern omicron prompted travel restrictions.

2. The team of experts delegated to carry out the project was about to leave for Namibia in November but had to return from the airport as travel restrictions kicked in the same day.

MP IN SPOT-LIGHT		Why Kuno Clicked
Spotted Trail Aug 2019 SC okays NTCA proposal to introduce African cheetahs in India.	Oct 2020 Kuno, Nauradehi among 5 sites in MP on shortlist, plus Shahgarh in Rajasthan.	> Was once home to cheetahs > Has ideal vegetation for cheetahs to ambush and hunt > Good prey base > Only one village that's being relocated
Nov 2020 WII begins surveying sites.	Jan 2021 CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan chairs meeting, is told Kuno is ideal.	Mar 2021 WII starts detailed survey of Kuno.
		July 2021 Minister announces cheetahs coming to Kuno in Nov.

A PARK FOR THE NEW CAT

The technical committee has made recommendations for site preparation in Kuno Palpur prior to the arrival of the cheetahs. Some recommendations are general in nature, such as prey base augmentation, relocation of villages, while others are site-specific. The recommendations include...

- Active management of grasslands by removal of certain grass species and selective and controlled use of cattle for management
- Dog vaccination (canine distemper, parvovirus and rabies) in two villages inside the reserve and other villages on the peripheries
- Protection enhancement through recruitment of a) ex army personnel b) filling up of vacant positions c) training of field staff in anti-poaching activities
- Creation of soft release enclosure measuring 1 sq. km with fence of 2.5 m height
- Last prey base assessment was done in 2018. A new one has been suggested



'Changes to marriage age will contradict other laws'

1. The amendments proposed to the anti-child marriage law define a child as someone under the age of 21 and contradicts laws where the legal age of competence is recognised as 18. This, experts say, may criminalise young people.

2. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to raise the age of marriage for women to 21, amends the definition of child to mean "a male or female who has not completed twenty-one years of age".

3. It overrides personal laws of Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Parsis, as well as the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

4. The Lok Sabha has referred this Bill to a Standing Committee after MPs demanded deeper scrutiny and wider consultations.

Conflict with other laws:

1. It may be patronising and patriarchal to call someone over the age of 18 a 'child', ready and fit to vote but not to marry.

2. The Majority Act, 1875 defines the age of majority as "the age of eighteen years and not before", and as 21 years if a guardian is appointed.

3. Under the Indian Contract Act, 1872 a person should have attained the age of majority in order to be able to enter into a contract.

4. The law to punish sexual crimes against children, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 too recognises a child as someone under the age of 18 years and thereby implies that the age of consent for sex is also 18 years.

Who's a child?

| While most laws fix 18 as the age when one ceases to be a child, there are exceptions:

■ The Majority Act, 1875 sets the age of majority at 18

■ 61st Constitutional Amendment Act fixes the minimum voting age at 18

■ POCSO Act, 2012 and Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 define a child as someone under the age of 18



■ Right to Education Act, 2009 says a child is someone between the ages of six and 14

■ Child Labour Amendment Act, 2016 says a child is someone under the age of 14 and an adolescent is aged between 14 and 18



5. The law that deals with juvenile offenders (or children in conflict with the law) and children who need care and protection, that is, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015 does the same.
6. Under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, 2009, which guarantees access to education, a child is someone between the ages of six and 14 years.
7. Whereas under the anti-child labour law or the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, which prohibits the engagement of children in all occupations and bans adolescents in hazardous occupations, a child is “a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age” and an adolescent means “a person who has completed his fourteenth year of age but has not completed his eighteenth year”.

At one level, we say that the age to enter into contracts and to vote is 18 years. We are recognising that a person has the mental capacity to make decisions that will affect her life commercially or as a citizen, but at the same time when it comes to her personal life, she doesn't have the right to make decisions. The proposed law makes an artificial distinction. By making marriages under 21 years invalid, we are criminalising those who marry under this age and depriving them of protection under the law.

Life expectancy reduced in 2020 after steady increase for 15 years: Study

1. The reduction of life expectancy across the globe during the first year of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was alarming, reversing progress made in past years, according to a new study.
2. Observed life expectancy in 2020 reduced in 29 of the 37 countries surveyed compared to the expected figures. It decreased by 1.1-2.3 years for men and 1.1-2.1 years for women.
3. Life expectancy, a widely used metric of mortality, is an indication of how long on average people can expect to survive if the age-specific mortality rates of that year remain constant for the remainder of their life.
4. Russia recorded the largest drop in life expectancy — for men it fell by 2.33 years and for women by 2.14 years. This was followed by the United States, where the figure for men reduced by 2.27 years and by 1.61 for women.



The Climate crisis has cost India 5 million hectares of crop in 2021

Around 36 mha agricultural area was affected due to hydro-meteorological calamities since 2016.

Highlights:

1. In 2021, extreme weather events wrought yet another distressing year for Indian farmers. Cyclone Tauktae and Cyclone Yaas wreaked havoc in several states. Floods in Maharashtra damaged standing crops.
2. This was followed by a 24 per cent nationwide rain deficit in August and 35 per cent excess rain in September. In October, heavy rains destroyed harvest-ready crops in many districts of Kerala.
3. The devastation continued even towards the end of the year. In November, unprecedented rainfall caused huge loss of life and property in the south Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.
4. Overall, India lost 5.04 million hectares (mha) crop area to cyclonic storms, flash floods, floods, landslides and cloudbursts till November 25, 2021.

Extreme weather events throughout the year have become the new normal. The decade-spanning 2010–2019 was the most turbulent for disasters, Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) assessment showed.

<p>MAINS DAWP</p>	<p>Q1. Discuss challenges India faces in its neighbourhood. Suggest a diplomatic way forward for India to avoid the tag of a "middle power".</p>
<p>MCQs</p>	<p>Q1. Which of the following National parks is chosen for the reintroduction of the Cheetah in India?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kuno National Park b. Kanha Kisli National Park c. Madhav National Park d. Jim Corbett National Park