

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 24, 2022

TAMIL NADU

- On February 23, the Tamil Nadu government - declared 500 sqkm in the northern part of Palk Bay as a dugong conservation reserve.
- ✓ This is the country's first-ever dugong reserve



- ✓ The state government has given its sanction to prepare a detailed project report and carry out baseline field studies at a budget of ₹25 lakh
- ✓ The total estimated cost for setting up the reserve is ₹5 crore, but the final figures will be known after the DPR is prepared.
- ✓ In this regard, the government order was issued by the additional chief secretary and TN secretary of environment, forests, and climate change
- ✓ Further, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden has been directed by the State Environment, Forests and Climate Change Department to send draft notification for the proposal for obtaining the concurrence of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- ✓ The government is also planning to build an international conservation centre and enhance seagrass beds under the Climate Change Mission

- ✓ Earlier, State Forest Minister K Ramachandran, in the Assembly, had announced the need for setting up of the Dugong conservation reserve to create public awareness about Dugongs
- ✓ In India, dugongs, more commonly known as sea cows, are found in Palk Bay in the Gulf of Mannar biosphere reserve, Andamans, and the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat.
- ✓ According to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), only 200-250 dugongs are left in the wild in 3 locations
- ✓ Among the three habitats, around 150 are found in Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu, one of the last surviving natural habitats for dugongs.
- ✓ Dugong is a critically endangered species living in shallow waters near the coast at a depth of 10 metres and is one of the “flagship species of the Palk Bay ”
- ✓ Further, in Andamans about 75 are found, and in the Gulf of Kutch another 25 of them are found.
- ✓ The reserve begins in the Adhirampatnam area in Thanjavur district and ends at Ammapatnam in Pudukottai district, which extends to 55 km in both the districts.
- ✓ The dugong reserve in Thanjavur part of the Palk Bay is spread over 12,450 hectares and in Pudukottai it is spread over 25,202 hectares of marine waters
- ✓ The Palk Bay is spread over 13,000 sqkm area of which only a small portion of 500 sqkm has been declared as a reserve for protecting the species.
- ✓ Dugong, an herbivorous mammal, can grow upto three meters long, weigh about 300 kilograms, and live for about 65 to 70 years, grazing on seagrass and coming to the surface to breathe.
- ✓ The loss of seagrass habitats, water pollution and degradation of the coastal ecosystem due to developmental activities have contributed to the reduction in the population of these slow-moving animals
- ✓ They are also victims of accidental entanglement in fishing nets and collision with boats, trawlers.
- ✓ Dugongs are endangered species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- ✓ The International Union for Conservation of Natural Flora and Fauna (IUCN) classified the dugong in its red list as vulnerable.
- ✓ Internationally, dugongs are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which prohibits the trade of the species and its parts.

INTERNATIONAL

- **Ukraine - declared a 30-day state of emergency, starting from February 24, amid fears of an all-out Russian military attack**
- ✓ The state of emergency allows authorities to impose restrictions on movement, block rallies and ban political parties and organizations “in the interests of national security and public order.”



- ✓ The Ukraine Foreign Ministry advised against travel to Russia and recommended any Ukrainians there to leave immediately
- ✓ Ukraine has already announced compulsory military service for all men of fighting age.
- ✓ The decision follows after President Vladimir Putin recognised the independence of the two rebel regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and ordered the deployment of “peacekeeping” troops there
- ✓ Meanwhile, Russia began evacuating its Kyiv embassy, citing threats
- ✓ Ukraine’s parliament, cabinet and foreign ministry websites were down, the latest in a series of outages in recent weeks which Kyiv has blamed on cyber attacks.
- ✓ Russian Premier, Putin laid out three conditions that he said could end the standoff, urging Kyiv to recognize Russia's sovereignty over Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014, to renounce its bid to join NATO and partially demilitarize.
- ✓ However, Ukraine has rejected such demands.

DEFENCE

- **On February 22, India - has received the first lot of Rafale fighters with India-specific enhancements to make them deadlier**



- ✓ With the delivery of two Rafale fighter jets now, France completed delivery of 35 out of 36 Rafale fighter planes to the country
 - ✓ These Rafales have come with hardware tweaks for the 13 India-specific enhancements (ISEs), which includes the capability to fire top-notch Meteor air-to-air missiles with a strike range of 120 to 150-km
 - ✓ The aircrafts are already armed with the over 300-km range Scalp air-to-ground cruise missiles and other armaments
 - ✓ The last or the 36th Rafale, on which the ISEs have been tested and certified in France, will be delivered in April.
 - ✓ The India specific enhancements on 4.5-generation fighters include low band frequency jammers, advanced communication systems, more capable radio altimeter, radar warning receiver, high altitude engine start-up, synthetic aperture radar, ground moving target indicator and tracking, missile approach warning systems, and very high-frequency range decoys
 - ✓ The twin-engine Rafale has a combat range of 780-km to 1,650-km without mid-air refuelling
 - ✓ Back in November, the government informed that the upgrade of the aircrafts would be carried out at the Ambala Air Force Station which is the first base of the plane
 - ✓ The Golden Arrows' 17 Squadron is operating from Ambala with the Rafales.
 - ✓ After Ambala, Hasimara in West Bengal is also fully equipped to operate with the Rafales.
 - ✓ The two squadrons with 18 jets each at Ambala and Hasimara have been planned for operations against Pakistan on the western front and China in the eastern sector.
 - ✓ The Rafales will be part of Exercise Vayu Shakti along with other fighter aircraft next month in the deserts of Jaisalmer, displaying its firepower and capabilities.
 - ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to witness the exercise.
 - ✓ India had signed an inter-governmental agreement with France in September 2016 to procure 36 Rafale jets at a cost of Rs 59,000 crore
- **The Indian Air Force - announced that Tejas jets are being deployed for a multi-nation exercise abroad for the first time.**



- ✓ India's indigenously built fighter aircraft, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, will take part in the multi-nation air exercise 'Ex Cobra Warrior 22' at Waddington, United Kingdom from March 6 to March 27
- ✓ According to IAF, the exercise will be a platform for the indigenously developed Tejas aircraft to demonstrate their manoeuvrability and operational capability.
- ✓ IAF's C-17 aircraft will provide the necessary transport support for induction and de-induction.
- ✓ Five Tejas aircraft are scheduled to fly to the UK to take part in the exercise
- ✓ Recently, three Tejas fighter jets and a 44-member contingent of the Indian Air Force (IAF) had participated in the Air Show at Singapore from February 15 to 18.
- ✓ The LCA Tejas is indigenously-designed by the Aircraft Development Agency (ADA) of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
- ✓ In addition to the initial 40 Mark 1 LCA Tejas already ordered by the IAF, another 83 will be manufactured, with 73 of these being LCA Mark 1A, or the advanced version of Tejas
- ✓ The Mark 1A will be more than 40% better than the current Mark 1 and are expected to be delivered from 2024
- ✓ Improvements to the new Mark 1A include air-to-air refuelling, beyond visual range (BVR) capabilities, and the ability to jam enemy radars.
- ✓ The indigenous content of the LCA Tejas is 50% and in the Mark 1A variant, it will be increased to 60%.

