



C.A Dated On 23-05-2019

State of Groundwater Reserve:

Why in News?

The Union Water Ministry is finalising an updated estimate on the state of groundwater reserves in India.

Background:

- The groundwater assessment, last done in 2013, is a survey that samples a sliver of blocks in each State and counts how many blocks have critically low levels of water and how many are well-stocked.
- Some States" showed a precipitous decline whereas some blocks showed an "improvement."
- An assessment from Punjab, the official said, pointed to "extreme" overexploitation of groundwater.

Break-up

- In 2013, the CGWB assessed 6,584 units across the country and found 4,520 to be "safe," 681 to be "semi-critical" 253 to be "critical" and 1,034 to be "overexploited." About 96 blocks were "saline".
- In a CGWB report of April 2015, the agency noted that the water resource potential or annual water availability of the country in terms of natural runoff (flow) in rivers is about 1,869 Billion Cubic Meter (BCM)/year.
- However, the usable water resources of the country is about 1,123 BCM/year. This is due to geographical limitation and water being unequally distributed in various river basins, making it difficult to extract all the available 1,869 BCM/year.
- Out of the 1,123 BCM/year, the shares of surface water and groundwater are 690 BCM/year and 433 BCM/year respectively.
- Setting aside 35 BCM for natural discharge, the net annual ground water availability for the entire country is 398 BCM.

Contributory Sources:

- The overall contribution of rainfall to the country's annual ground water resource is 68%.



C.A Dated On 23-05-2019

- The share of other resources, such as canal seepage, return flow from irrigation, recharge from tanks, ponds and water conservation structures taken together is 32%.
- The national per capita annual availability of water has reduced from 1,816 cubic metres in 2001 to 1,544 cubic metres in 2011 — a reduction of 15%.

Cause of concern

- That India's groundwater has been depleting at a worrying rate since 1995, the CGWB has shown.
- In 1995, only 3% of districts had overexploited their groundwater reserves whereas by 2011, that had increased to 15%.

OBC Commission:

Why in News?

A commission appointed in 2017 to examine the sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) has been given a two-month extension by President Ram Nath Kovind, according to an order of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on Tuesday.

Objectives of Commission:

- The commission had been constituted to "examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of Other Backward Classes with reference to such classes included in the Central List", the October 2, 2017 order notifying its creation said.
- The commission was meant to "work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorisation within such OBCs and to take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

Background:



C.A Dated On 23-05-2019

- The commission, whose chairperson was former Delhi High Court Chief Justice G. Rohini, was supposed to present its report to the President in 12 weeks from the time the chairperson assumed charge.
- Since considerable time was taken up in obtaining the data and thereafter in analysing of the data, the tenure of the Commission has been extended from time to time and last till 31.05.2019.

Chagos Archipelago:

Context:

India was among 116 nations to vote in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution that demanded the UK withdraw its “colonial administration” from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within six months, supporting [Mauritius](#) in its quest for the restoration of sovereignty over the island chain in the Indian Ocean.

Details:

- The General Assembly adopted the resolution on Wednesday ‘Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965’ with 116 votes in favour, 56 abstentions and six nations voting against, including the UK, the United States, Australia, Israel and the Maldives.

Background:

- The UK retained sovereignty over the islands after Mauritius gained its independence from Britain in 1968.
- The islands have since been used for defence purposes by the UK and the United States, which established a military base on the island of Diego Garcia.



C.A Dated On 23-05-2019

- The entire Chagosian population was forcibly removed from the territory between 1967 and 1973, and prevented from returning.

Significance of the Resolution:

- The resolution welcomed the February 25, 2019 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.
- The principal judicial body of the UN had said in its opinion that the UK Government is "under an obligation" to end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago "as rapidly as possible".
- The resolution affirmed, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the Court, that the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.
- It demanded that the UK withdraw its colonial administration from the Chagos Archipelago unconditionally within six months, enabling Mauritius to complete the decolonization of its territory as rapidly as possible.

India's Stand:

- India voted in support of the resolution, telling the 193-member that as part of New Delhi's longstanding support to all peoples striving for decolonisation, India has consistently supported Mauritius in its quest for the restoration of sovereignty" over the Chagos Archipelago.
- "India shares, with the international community, security concerns relating to the Indian Ocean.
- We are conscious of the need for collective commitment towards ensuring the security and prosperity of our oceanic space.

British stand:

- It has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Contrary to what has been said today, it has never been part of the Republic of Mauritius.
- The joint [United Kingdom](#) and United States defence facility on the British Indian Ocean Territory plays a vital role in its efforts to keep "our allies and friends, including Mauritius, in the region, and beyond, safe and secure."



C.A Dated On 23-05-2019

Threat to Underground Species:

Why in news?

Bathynellaceans are minute crustaceans (crab family) and they live in the porous spaces of sediments along the waterways. Not more than 0.5-mm long, they are barely visible to the naked eye. Only eight species of these crustacean in seven genera were known in India till the end of 20th century.

Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU) scientist and authority on Indian Bathynellid species and bio-speleologist said that 13 of the 31 Bathynellid species were endangered by indiscriminate sand mining in the State.

Issues:

- There were no laws or regulations to protect these new species, many of which were discovered by the group working on hypogean fauna (that live in caves and tunnels) and the phreatic fauna (that live in groundwater aquifers, that is rock and soil saturated with water).
- The preservation of subterranean fauna was not being given due importance.
- One million species of flora and fauna are predicted to become extinct in the next few decades.
- They listed places on the banks of Godavari Bank and on the banks of Krishna River only at Jaggayyapeta as the hotspots for these minute crustaceans.
- Indiscriminate sand mining on the banks of Penna River and Vamshadhara river are also going to effect phreatic species
- With increase in cave tourism and other cave-related activity like treasure hunting, caving (for recreation) the fragile environment of these hypogean ecosystems was deteriorating leading to the disappearance of the fauna which survived for millions of years, he said.

Cave protection



शोइशा
IAS ACADEMY
Your Dreams, Our Mission!

C.A Dated On 23-05-2019

- To begin with, surveys should be conducted by the Geology and other departments to locate and protect caves and to secure them from treasure hunters and cave vandals. The extremophile fauna that live in caves in the depths of earth were a great asset to mankind.
- Cave conservation involving locals, scientific studies, training of guides and creating awareness among tourists were some of the basic measures.
- Law and regulations should be brought about to protect these cryptic ecosystems.