NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY FORMED CHEETAH PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE (CPSC) TO KEEP WATCH ON CHEETAH PROJECT

- The 11 member CPSC, comprising national and international experts constituted **to oversee the implementation of Project Cheetah** will be in **force for two years.**
  - ➤ **'Project Cheetah'** is the world's **first inter-continental large wild carnivore translocation** project.
  - ➤ **Since Cheetah is a keystone species** the project was expected to restore open forest and grassland ecosystems, conserve biodiversity, etc.
- **Committee is formed in the wake of the recent death of cubs born to a translocated Namibian cheetah** at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Challenges in sustainability of 'Project Cheetah'**
  - ➤ **Cheetahs have a tendency to range over wide distances,** whereas KNP has very small area available.
  - ➤ **Animal behaviour issues related to** inability to learn dispersal and movement, foraging, territorial aggression.
  - ➤ **Lack of similar prey base** from their native ecosystem at the place of translocation.
  - ➤ **Difficulty with the post-release monitoring** due to topography and remoteness, availability of skilled personnel.
  - ➤ Forests across India suffer from a **large population of stray dogs** who carry pathogens like **Parvovirus which are fatal to cheetahs.**

KEY MANDATES OF CPSC

- **Monitor the progress of programme** and advise the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)
- **Decide on opening up the cheetah habitat for eco-tourism** and suggest regulations in this regard
- **Suggest ways to involve the local community** in the project activities

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION (WMO) APPROVES A GLOBAL TRACKER FOR GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (GHGs)

- The World Meteorological Congress has approved a new GHG monitoring initiative **'Global Greenhouse Gas Watch (GGGW)** to aid urgent action in reducing heat-trapping gases.
- It will **bring all space-based and surface-based observing systems,** as well as **modelling and data assimilation capabilities, under one roof.**
  - ➤ At present, **there is no comprehensive, timely international exchange** of surface and space-based GHGs observations or modelling products.
  - ➤ It will build on WMO's **Global Atmosphere Watch** established in 1989 and its **Integrated Global Greenhouse Gas Information System.**
- The GGGW will **consists of four main components**
  - ➤ **A comprehensive, sustained, global set of surface-based and satellite-based observations** of CO_2, CH_4 and N_2O concentrations.
  - ➤ **Prior estimates of the GHG emissions** based on activity data and process-based models;
  - ➤ A set of **global high-resolution Earth System models** representing GHG cycles;
  - ➤ Associated with the models, **data assimilation systems** that optimally combine the observations with model calculations to generate products of higher accuracy.
- **Significance:** Improved evaluation of sources and sinks of GHGs and indicate their association with the biosphere, the ocean and the permafrost areas.

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

HQ Geneva, Switzerland

Genesis: An intergovernmental organization established by the ratification of the WMO Convention in 1950.
- Originates from the International Meteorological Organization (IMO), which dates back to 1873.

Objective: Dedicated to international cooperation and coordination on the state and behaviour of the **Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the land and oceans, the weather and climate** it produces, and the resulting distribution of water resources.

Membership: 193 Member States and Territories.

Member

Other key information:
- Its supreme body is the World Meteorological Congress.
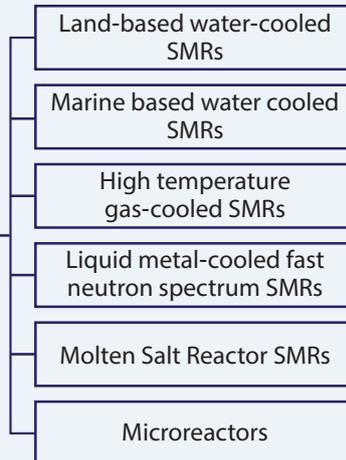- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM (ITF) RELEASED TRANSPORT OUTLOOK 2023 REPORT AT LEIPZIG TRANSPORT SUMMIT

- Transport Outlook 2023 report is a **biennial report.**
  - The Report examines the impacts of different policy measures on global transport demand and carbon dioxide emissions to 2050.
- The report stressed the need for **transport decarbonization which means investing in public** transport infrastructure that supports the move to transport modes with higher occupancy.
- **Key Highlights**
  - **Decarbonising transportation can reduce the need for investment in core infrastructure** — roads, railways and ports.
  - If **action to decarbonise transport is accelerated,** the transport sector can **reduce its CO$_2$ emissions by about 80%** over the next **25 years** (compared to 2019).
  - **Turmoil in energy markets and cost-of-living crisis** complicate efforts to decarbonize transport.
- **Recommendations**
  - **Develop comprehensive strategies** for future mobility and infrastructure.
  - **Accelerate the transition to clean vehicle fleets** via- the promotion of alternative fuels and vehicle technologies.
  - Support **multimodal and sustainable transport networks.**
  - **Target incentives and introduce access restrictions in cities for high-emitting vehicles** to increase the uptake of zero-emission road vehicles.
  - **Reform the current method of taxing car use** through fuel excise duty and introduce more distance-based pricing.

International Transport Forum (Organisation format)
About
➢ It is an intergovernmental organization.
➢ It is politically autonomous and administratively integrated with the OECD.
Member: 64 member countries. ⊙ **Member**
Other information:
➢ It acts as a think tank for transport policy and organizes the Annual Summit of transport ministers.
➢ The ITF is the only global body that covers all transport modes.

NITI AAYOG RELEASES 'A REPORT ON THE ROLE OF SMALL MODULAR REACTORS IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION'

- The report **emphasizes the potential of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) to effectively complement the substantial contribution of large reactors** in accelerating the energy transition process.
- As per the report the SMR industry faces challenges due to **evolution of a large number of SMR technology alternatives at the same time,** limited financing, absence establishment of fully **developed operational fabrication facility,** etc.
- **Recommendation**
  - **Standardization of designs** of components and modules and **update existing safety assessment methodology.**
  - Ensure availability of **low-cost finance and utilization of innovative financing instruments** such as blended finance, green bonds, etc.
  - **Ensure availability of required skilled personnel** across the value chain of engineering, design, testing, etc.
- SMRs are advanced **nuclear reactors with power capacity of up to 300 MW(e) per unit.** SMRs are:
  - **Small-** physically a fraction of the size of a conventional nuclear power reactor.
  - **Modular-** making it possible for systems and components to be factory-assembled and transported as a unit to a location for installation.
  - **Reactors-** harnessing nuclear fission to generate heat to produce energy.

DIFFERENT SMRS DESIGNS
- Land-based water-cooled SMRs
- Marine based water cooled SMRs
- High temperature gas-cooled SMRs
- Liquid metal-cooled fast neutron spectrum SMRs
- Molten Salt Reactor SMRs
- Microreactors

SUPREME COURT JUDGE REFUSED TO RECUSE HIMSELF FROM HEARING A PLEA BY A FORMER INDIAN POLICE SERVICE (IPS) OFFICER

- Whenever there is a **potential conflict of interest, a judge can recuse or withdraw from a case** to prevent the perception of being biased.
- **Key principles guiding recusal by judges**
  - **Nemo judex in sua causa** that is, no person shall be a judge in his own case.
  - **'Justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done'** propounded in 1924 in Rex v. Sussex Justices by the then Lord Chief Justice of England.
- India has **no codified rules governing recusals** and the **decision to recuse rests solely on the conscience and discretion of the judge.**
  - If a judge recuses himself, the **case is listed before the Chief Justice for allotment to an alternate Bench.**
- **SC judgements on recusal**
  - **Ranjit Thakur v Union of India (1987),** the Supreme Court ruled that the test for determining the likelihood of bias is based on the reasonableness of the apprehension perceived by the party involved.
  - **State of West Bengal v. Shivananda Pathak (1998), SC defined judicial bias** as a preconceived opinion to decide a case or an issue in a particular manner.

There are two kinds of recusals
Automatic where a judge himself withdraws from the case.
When a party raises a plea for recusal highlighting the possibility of bias or personal interest of the judge in the case.

EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION (EAEU) MEETS TO SPEED UP PROPOSED FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (FTA) WITH INDIA

- EAEU has **decided to expedite the proposed FTA with India** that would give India market access to resource-rich Eurasia.
  - ➤ **FTA** is a pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports among them.
- **Significance of FTA with Eurasia**
  - ➤ **Diversification of the basket of goods & services** between the two Regions.
    - ■ FTA will help the **two partners to collaborate in areas** such as oil and gas, gold and diamond, timber, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, aviation, railways, and logistics
  - ➤ **Improved logistics & Connectivity** between the two Regions.
  - ➤ FTA could make India a hub for knowledge-based services, **improving the 'Brand India' image.**
  - ➤ It would **improve bilateral ties** between India and the 5 nations of the Union.
- **About EAEU**
  - ➤ It is an international organization for regional economic integration.
  - ➤ It **has an international legal personality** and is established by the **Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union.**
  - ➤ **Member:** Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz, and Russia.
  - ➤ **Mandate:** provides for the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor, and pursues coordinated, harmonized, and single policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty and international agreements within the Union.

ALSO IN NEWS

Forum Shopping	• Recently, Chief Justice of India condemned the practice of forum shopping. • When **litigants or lawyers attempt to deliberately move their case to a particular judge or Court** where they think the judgment could be more favourable, they are said to be "forum shopping." • The Supreme Court in **1988** in **Chetak Construction Ltd. vs. Om Prakash** held that a litigant cannot be permitted choice of the forum.
RBI become a net seller of US dollars in FY23	• In FY2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) **sold $25.52 billion on a net basis** in the spot foreign exchange market. ➤ Before this, RBI was a **net purchaser of dollar for three consecutive years.** • The sale was aimed at **curbing volatility in the rupee caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict** and **interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve** • The **RBI booked a huge profit in FY2023** by selling dollars as they were bought at lower levels (rupee was around 60-70) and sold at higher levels (Rs. was around 80).
Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB)	• **Russian hackers encrypted IIB's data** through a ransomware attack. **Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB)** — HQ: Hyderabad, Telangana **Genesis:** IIB was established **by Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India** (IRDAI) in 2009 and formally inaugurated in 2010. **About:** It is registered as an **independent society** under the Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act in 2012. **Objective:** Act as a single platform maintaining a repository and analytics of insurance-sector related information in India. **Other Key Information:** ○ Provides a **bundle of services related to motor insurance** to multiple stakeholders ○ **Spearheads Mortality and Morbidity Investigation Centre** (MMIC) Operations. ○ **Handles Central Index Server** which acts as a nodal point between different Insurance Repositories. ○ Maintains a **Registry of all Hospitals in the network of Insurance** (ROHINI).

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)	• **The Ministry of Minority Affairs** (MoMA) has approved grant under PMJVK to support the **upgradation of Unani Medicine facilities** at Hyderabad, Chennai, Lucknow, Silchar and Bengaluru.
	• **About PMJVK**
	  ➤ **Ministry:** Ministry of minority affairs
	  ➤ **Objective:** To develop **infrastructure projects,** provide basic amenities and reduce imbalances and development deficit in the **identified Minority Concentration Areas.**
	  ➤ **Approach: Demand driven** financial assistance for infrastructural development for community assets only.
	  ➤ **Other features:** Infrastructure assets developed under the project are for use of **all communities living in the Catchment areas.**

Implementation Plan for Advancing Climate, Environment, and Health Science and Services	• The World Meteorological Congress recognized climate change as a threat to human health and **endorsed a 10-year plan to scale up health services.** ➤ **The WMC is the supreme body of the WMO.** • It aim to **achieve better health and well-being for people facing existing and emerging extreme weather events,** climate change and environmental risks through the effective integration of climate, environment and health science and services across the world. • Also, WMO, WHO, and NOAA jointly sponsor the **Global Heat Health Information Network** to enhance awareness and capacity for effectively managing health risks associated with extreme heat.
Blazar	• Indian Astronomical Observatory (located in Hanle of Ladakh) has **observed the brightening of BL Lacertae (BL Lac), a blazar** located about 950 million light years away from Earth. • A **Blazar is a type of galaxy** that is **powered by a humongous black hole** and is **among one of the brightest and most powerful objects** in the universe. ➤ They are known for **emitting highly energetic particles and radiation,** including gamma rays, X-rays, and radio waves.

Khorramshahr-4 ballistic missile	• Iran launched the fourth generation of its **liquid-fuelled of Khorramshahr ballistic missile, named Kheibar.**
	  ➤ The **Khorramshahr is named after an Iranian city** that was the scene of heavy fighting during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.
	  ➤ **Kheibar, after a Jewish fortress** (in present-day Saudi Arabia) **conquered by the Muslims** in the 7th century.
	• **Khorramshahr-4 has a 2,000-kilometre range** with a **1,500-kilogram warhead.**
	• It is modeled after **North Korea's Musudan ballistic missile.**
	• Ballistic missiles uses projectile motion to deliver nuclear or conventional **warheads on a target.**
	• They are powered initially by a rocket.

The National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS)	• Recently, the USA approved the sale of $285 million worth **Air Defence System to Ukraine.**
	• **National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) is a highly adaptable combat-proven medium-range air defense solution.**
	  ➤ It has the **ability to destroy fixed and rotary wing aircraft,** unmanned aerial vehicles and emerging cruise missile threats.
	• **India's Air Defence Systems**
	  ➤ Very Short Range Air Defence System **(VSHORADS)**
	  ➤ S400 Missile Defence System with a range of **400 km.**
	  ➤ Prithvi Air defense system with a range of **300 to 2000 km.**
	  ➤ Advance Air defense system with a range of **150 to 200 km.**

e-governed State	• Kerala has become the **first full 'e-governed state' in India.**
	• It has digitized a range of government services, ensuring prompt and transparent delivery to its citizens.
	• E-governance, meaning **'electronic governance'** is using ICTs such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing for the purpose of enhancing governance.**
	• **Initiatives of Kerala:**
	  ➤ **Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON) project,** which has made internet access a citizen's right.
	  ➤ **e-Sevanam,** a single portal for 900 public services to taluk-level offices.