



# CSB IAS ACADEMY

## THE ROAD MAP TO MUSSORRIE...

PRELIMS EDGE – 2025 – 09/02/2025

### UNITED STATES AGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

**Context:** The United States of America's Administration recently decided to put an end to United States Agency of International Development.



#### About USAID

- It is an independent US government agency responsible for **civilian foreign aid and development assistance**.
- It is one of the **largest aid agencies** in the world, accounting for over half of all US foreign assistance.
- The agency was established via an executive order by **President Kennedy** after the US Congress in 1961 passed the Foreign Assistance Act.
- The act mandated the creation of a **single agency to administer foreign aid**.
- The agency provides assistance to other countries primarily by funding non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foreign governments, international organizations, or other US agencies.

- **Aim:** To alleviate poverty, provide education and healthcare, among other things.
- **Funding:** The agency managed more than \$43 billion in funds, and provided assistance to around 130 countries in FY2023.
- The top 10 recipients of USAID-managed funds in FY2023 (in descending order of funding).
  - Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Syria.
- **Employees:** USAID employed more than 10,000 people in FY2023, according to CRS, with approximately two-thirds of this workforce serving overseas.
- USAID maintains more than 60 missions around the world.

#### Significance for India:

- The US has provided development and humanitarian assistance to India since 1951, when President Harry Truman signed the **India Emergency Food Assistance Act**.
- Economic aid from the US has also helped establish 8 **agricultural universities**, the first **Indian Institute of Technology**, and 14 regional engineering colleges.
- It also strengthened India's national programs on **immunization, family planning, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and polio**.

- In 2004, the Indian government decided to reject any foreign aid that comes with conditions. This has, over time, led to a decline in the quantum of such assistance.

*Domestic interests, global cost (The Hindu)*

## SPECIES IN NEWS

### Mithun



- The Mithun or **gayal** (*Bos frontalis*) is a **heavily built, semi-domesticated bovine species**.
- Mithun is believed to have originated more than 8000 years ago and is **considered to be a descendent of wild Indian gaur** or bison.
- It is known as the '**cattle of the mountain**'.

#### Distribution:

- The **highest concentration** of mithuns in the world is spread **over the North Eastern (NE) region** of India,

with **Arunachal Pradesh** **having the highest population**.

- It is also found in parts of Southeast Asia, viz., **Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bhutan**.
- The geographic zone is covered with **tropical evergreen rain forests**.
- It is the **state animal of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland**.
- The '**Soulung**' festival is observed annually by the **Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh** to **commensurate the birth and arrival of Mithun on this earth**.

#### Physical Features:

- Mithun **appears somewhat similar to that of Guar** (Indian bison) but is **smaller in size**.
- Like Guars, they are **strongly built, large-sized fleshy animals** with an average weight of 400- 650 kg.
- The characteristic feature of Mithun lies in the **head, which has a well-developed, broad frontal bone** with a **flat-shaped face** and from the front view, it appears like an inverted triangle from where **two horns emerge from the lateral sides**.
- Horn colour varies from whitish yellow to salty black in most animals.
- The young mithuns are light to dark brown in colour, which darkens with age.
- In **adult mithuns, the most common colour is black** with white markings and white with black marking. Other than these two, albino or pure black is also found.

#### Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List: Vulnerable**
- **CITES: Appendix I**

### Marsupials

- Marsupials are the group of mammals commonly thought of as **pouched mammals**.

- They give **birth to relatively undeveloped young** that often reside in a pouch located on their mothers' abdomen for a certain amount of time.



- A distinctive characteristic common to most of these species is that the young are carried in a pouch.
  - **Examples:** Marsupials include opossums, Tasmanian devils, kangaroos, koalas, wombats, wallabies, bandicoots, and the extinct thylacine.
- They represent the clade originating from the last common ancestor of **extant metatherians**, the group containing all mammals more closely related to marsupials than to placentals. **Not all marsupials have pouches.**
- Marsupials have an extra pubic bone, the epipubic bone, to support their pouch.
- **Distribution of Marsupials:** There are over 330 species of marsupials. Around two-thirds of them live in **Australia**.
- The other third live mostly in **South America**.

## TERMS IN NEWS

### National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

- It was first set up in 1994 under the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993**.



- It was functioning as a statutory body till 2004, when the law lapsed.
- Since then, the commission has been acting as a **non-statutory body** under the Social Justice Ministry with its tenure being extended from time to time.
- It was established as an institution to investigate the conditions of Safai Karamcharis (waste collectors) in India and **make recommendations to the Government**.

### Functions of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

- The NCSK has been giving its recommendations to the Government regarding specific programmes for welfare of Safai Karamcharis, study and evaluate the existing welfare programmes for Safai Karamcharis, investigate cases of specific grievances etc.
- The NCSK has been assigned the work to monitor the implementation of the **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**.

- It is the only body keeping track of sewer deaths in the entire country.

#### Donkey Route

- Indian deportees from the US, arriving in Amritsar, recently shared their harrowing experiences using the "donkey route" for **illegal immigration**.
- The donkey route is the route taken by illegal migrants to **stealthily cross many unknown countries** with the help of agents and human traffickers before entering the country of their choice, like the US or the UK.
- Named after a **Punjabi idiom referring to an arduous, unplanned journey**, it involves crossing multiple international borders, often through treacherous terrain, under false promises of legal entry.
- Donkey routes typically involve **illegal border crossings via indirect routes with multiple stops in different countries**.
- For instance, individuals might obtain a tourist visa for the **European Union's Schengen Area**, allowing free movement across 26 countries, and then illegally enter the UK with the help of "consultants" or "agents."
- These agents often charge hefty fees for services ranging from fake documentation to smuggling via shipping containers.

#### M23 rebels

- M23, or the **March 23 Movement**, is one of more than 100 armed groups **fighting Congolese forces** in the mineral-rich **eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**.

- M23's leadership is **dominated by ethnic Tutsis**, a minority group in eastern DR Congo.
- It is present in **North Kivu province in areas bordering Rwanda and Uganda** and has more than 8,000 fighters, according to the UN.
- It is **named after the date in 2009 of the signing of an accord between the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), a Tutsi-led rebel group, and the Congolese government** to end a revolt led by the Tutsi people in eastern DRC.
- The agreement promised better political representation and integration of former rebels into the Congolese army.
- It is alleged that **Rwanda is backing the M23 rebels**.



### SCHEMES IN NEWS

#### Swavalambini Programme.

- It was launched by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**, in collaboration with **NITI Aayog** in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

- This initiative is aimed at **empowering female students** in select **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** in the northeast by equipping them with the essential entrepreneurial mind-set, resources, and mentorship they need to succeed in their entrepreneurial journey.



- MSDE through **Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE)** in collation with NITI Aayog, a structured **stage-wise entrepreneurial process**—from awareness to development, mentorship, and funding support, has been introduced.
- Those who successfully build their ventures will be recognized and awarded, ensuring that their success stories inspire others.
- The initiative aims to provide structured training through the **Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP)** which introduces 600 female students to entrepreneurship as a viable career option.
- For 300 selected students, the **Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP)** offers an intensive 40-hour training covering crucial business aspects such as training and skilling, access to finance, market linkages, compliance and legal support, business services, and networking opportunities.
- This will be followed by **six months of mentorship** and handholding support to

help participants translate their ideas into sustainable prospects.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

**Q1: Consider the following statements regarding Mithun**

- It is a heavily built, semi-domesticated bovine species.
- It is considered to be a descendent of wild Indian gaur or bison.
- It is considered as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List.

**How many of the above statements are correct?**

- Only One
- Only Two
- All of the Above
- None of the Above

**Q2: Consider the following statements regarding Marsupials.**

- Marsupials are the group of mammals commonly thought of as pouched mammals.
- They give birth to relatively undeveloped young that often reside in a pouch.
- There are over 330 species of marsupials, around two-thirds of them live in Australia.

**How many of the above statements are incorrect?**

- Only One
- Only Two
- All of the Above
- None of the Above

**Q3: The term Donkey Route refers to which of the following?**

- A. Alternate Route to Mount Everest Base Camp
- B. Southern Route to Antarctica
- C. Illegal Migration Routes
- D. Drug Trafficking Routes of Columbia

**Answers**

- 1. B
- 2. D
- 3. C
- 4. A
- 5. d

**Q4: The term M23 Rebels, often seen in the news is located in which of the following regions?**

- A. Democratic Republic of Congo
- B. South Sudan
- C. Chad
- D. Bolivia

**Q5: Consider the following statements regarding Swavalambini Programme.**

1. It is aimed at empowering female students in select Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the northeast by equipping them with the essential entrepreneurial mind-set, resources, and mentorship
2. It was launched by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in collaboration with NITI Aayog in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

How many of the above statements are incorrect?

- A. Only Statement 1
- B. Only Statement 2
- C. Both the statements
- D. None of the Above