

GEOGRAPHY**Cyclone Fani- an unusual storm**

A powerful cyclonic storm named Fani (pronounced Foni) is headed towards the Odisha coast. It is not just a severe cyclone but an “extremely severe cyclone”. Expected to generate storms with wind speeds as high as 200 km per hour, it has the potential to cause widespread damage in Odisha and neighbouring states. The last time such a powerful cyclonic storm had emerged in the Bay of Bengal at this time of the year, in 2008, it had killed more than 1.25 lakh people in Myanmar. However India has impressively managed disasters caused by cyclones, most remarkably during Cyclone Phailin of 2013, which was even stronger than the approaching Fani. Fani is, thus, unusual, and that is mainly because of the place it originated, very close to the Equator, and the long route it has taken to reach the landmass.

How are they formed?

- Cyclones are formed over slightly warm ocean waters.
- The temperature of the top layer of the sea, up to a depth of about 60 metres, need to be at least 28°C to support the formation of a cyclone.
- This explains why the April-May and October-December periods are conducive for cyclones.
- Then, the low level of air above the waters needs to have an ‘anticlockwise’ rotation (in the northern hemisphere; clockwise in the southern hemisphere).
- During these periods, there is a ITCZ in the Bay of Bengal whose southern boundary experiences winds from west to east, while the northern boundary has winds flowing east to west.
- This induces the anticlockwise rotation of air.
- Once formed, cyclones in this area usually move northwest. As it travels over the sea, the cyclone gathers more moist air from the warm sea, and adds to its heft.

What strengthens them?

- A thumb rule for cyclones is that the more time they spend over the seas, the stronger they become.
- Hurricanes around the US, which originate in the vast open Pacific Ocean, are usually much stronger than the tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, a relatively narrow and enclosed region.
- The cyclones originating here, after hitting the landmass, decay rapidly due to friction and absence of moisture.

Cyclone Fani in Odisha: In situ origins

- A big difference between the strengths of cyclones in April-May and October-December is that the former originate in situ in the Bay of Bengal itself, barely a few hundred kilometres from the landmass.
- On the other hand, cyclones in October-December are usually remnants of cyclonic systems that emerge in the Pacific Ocean, but manage to come to the Bay of Bengal.
- They are considerably weakened after crossing the southeast Asian landmass near the South China Sea.
- These systems already have some energy, and gather momentum as they traverse over the Bay of Bengal.
- April-May is not the season for typhoons in the west Pacific Ocean. Most of the typhoons in west Pacific in northern hemisphere form between June and November.
- That is why almost all the cyclones in the Bay of Bengal in April-May period are in situ systems.

What’s unusual with Fani?

- The in situ cyclonic systems in the Bay of Bengal usually originate around latitude 10°, in line with Chennai or Thiruvananthapuram.
- Fani, on the other hand, originated quite close to the Equator, around latitude 2°, well below the Sri Lankan landmass.
- The forecast landfall on the Odisha coast is at a latitude of almost 20°.

- It has traversed a long way on the sea, thus gaining strength that is unusual for cyclones originating in the Bay of Bengal in this season.
- It was initially headed northwestwards, towards the Tamil Nadu coast, but changed course midway, and swerved northeast away from the coastline to reach Odisha.
- If it had remained on its original course, and made a landfall over the Tamil Nadu coastline, Fani would only have been a normal cyclone, not the extremely severe cyclone it has now become.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

LG's role in Puducherry

The Madras High Court has that the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) of Puducherry could not interfere with the day-to-day administration of the Union Territory when an elected government was in place. The court said incessant interference from the L-G would amount to running a "parallel government."

What did the court say?

- The Central government as well as the Administrator [the term used in the Constitution to refer to the Lieutenant-Governor] should be true to the concept of democratic principles.
- Otherwise, the constitutional scheme of the country of being democratic and republic would be defeated.
- The judge made it clear that government secretaries were bound to take instructions from the ministers concerned and the Council of Ministers, headed by the CM, besides reporting to them on official matters.
- The secretaries are not empowered to issue orders on their own or upon the instructions of the Administrator.

There lies a difference: Delhi and Puducherry

- The court also went on to point out the differences between the powers conferred on the legislatures of Puducherry and Delhi under Articles 239A and 239AA of the Constitution.
- The court said though Article 239AA imposes several restrictions on the legislature of Delhi, no such restrictions had been imposed explicitly in the case of Puducherry under Article 239A.
- While the LG of Delhi is also guided by the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and the Transaction of Business of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Rules, 1993, the LG of Puducherry is guided mostly by the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.

LG of Puducherry Vs. LG of Delhi

- The LG of Delhi enjoys greater powers than the LG of Puducherry.
- The LG of Delhi has "Executive Functions" that allow him to exercise his powers in matters connected to public order, police and land "in consultation with the Chief Minister."
- Under the constitutional scheme, the Delhi Assembly has the power to legislate on all subjects except law and order and land.
- However, the Puducherry Assembly can legislate on any issue under the Concurrent and State Lists.
- However, if the law is in conflict with a law passed by Parliament, the law passed by Parliament prevails.

Supreme Court seeks ECs reply on voter prosecution

The Supreme Court has sought the Election Commission's response on a plea which sought striking down of a provision in election rules that envisages prosecution of an elector if a complaint alleging malfunctioning of EVMs and VVPATs cannot be proven.

49MA of the Conduct of Elections Rules

- 49MA of the Conduct of Elections Rules is sought unconstitutional as it criminalised reporting of malfunctioning of EVM or VVPATs.
- The plea contended that the onus of proving an allegation cannot be on a voter when machines used for voting showed 'arbitrary deviant behaviour'.
- The plea sought direction to the EC to register a complaint of any deviant behaviour of equipment used in the election process while pointing out that the burden of proof rests on the elector at the moment.

- One risks criminal charges even if the complaint is correct as the machines need not repeat its arbitrary behavior for a second consecutive time.
- When an elector is asked to cast a test vote, under Rule 49MA, s/he may not get the same result because of a pre-programmed deviant behaviour of EVMs, the plea said.

Then who will report malfunctioning?

- In the course of reporting deviant behaviour of an electronic machine used in the election process, an elector has to cast two votes; first one in secrecy and the second a test vote in the presence of the candidates or polling agents.
- A test vote cast subsequently in the presence of others cannot become a conclusive evidence of the deviant behaviour or otherwise of the previous vote cast in absolute secrecy.

Voters need security against persecution. Why?

- Holding an elector accountable for deviant behaviours of EVMs and VVPATs could deter them from making a complaint, essential for improving the process.
- This may also create an illusion of free and fair elections, whereas the fact would be that people have simply not come forward to lodge complaints.
- Since only an elector could be a witness to the secrecy of his vote cast, it would violate Article 20(3) of the Constitution which says that no person accused of an offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

UNSC designates Masood Azhar as global terrorist

Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar was listed as a designated terrorist by the UN Security Council 1267 Committee. It would mean a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze on Azhar. The listing is a victory for India in a decade-old diplomatic battle waged primarily by it and supported by its friends at the UNSC.

Paradigm shift by China

- Since China had blocked it four times at the UNSC Resolution 1267 Sanctions committee, US felt that this would put China in an awkward position.
- It would have to publicly defend the veto — and, in effect, a terrorist.

Speculating Chinese intentions

- China's decision appears to be a well-rounded exercise aimed at encouraging India to bond with Eurasia instead of the Indo-Pacific.
- It has taken its "all weather" ally Pakistan on board before taking the decision.
- China's move followed Russia's decision last month to honour Mr. Modi with 'Order of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First,' —Russia's highest civilian award, in the midst of the election campaign.
- Both China and Russia want New Delhi to consolidate its ties with Eurasia on Mr. Modi's watch, rather than allow India to drift further in the direction of the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific strategy.
- India is already a member of the Eurasia-centred Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Again a bliss for Pakistan

- Beijing had decided to announce listing after the Belt and Road Forum (BRF), so as not to embarrass visiting Pakistan PM Imran Khan, who was guest at the conclave.
- Pakistan may not be averse to Azhar's designation, as it could help avoid being "blacklisted" by the FATF.
- Otherwise it could advance Islamabad's economic isolation.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Kashmir Stag (Hangul)

A massive decline in the population of Kashmir's iconic wildlife species, the Hangul (*Cervus hanglu hanglu*), also known as the Kashmir stag, continues to be a big concern.

Kashmir Stag (Hangul)

- Hangul, the state animal of Jammu & Kashmir, is restricted to the Dachigam National Park some 15 km north-west of Jammu & Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

- The Hangul is placed under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the J&K Wildlife Protection Act, 1978.
- The Hangul was once widely distributed in the mountains of Kashmir and parts of Chamba district in neighbouring Himachal Pradesh.
- The IUCN's Red List has classified it as Critically Endangered and is similarly listed under the Species Recovery Programme of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Environmental Information System (ENVIS) of the MoEFCC.

Why is Hangul crucial?

- From a population of 5,000 in the early 1900s, the Hangul's numbers have constantly declined over the decades.
- The Hangul is considered equally significant to the state of Jammu & Kashmir as the tiger is to the whole of India.
- It is the only Asiatic survivor or sub-species of the European red deer. But the state animal's decreasing population remains a big concern.
- According to the latest survey in 2017, the population of Hangul is 182 in Dachigam and adjoining areas. Earlier population estimates suggest that there were 197 deer in 2004 and 186 in 2015.
- The IUCN Red Data Book — which contains lists of species at risk of extinction — has declared the Hangul as one of three species that were critically endangered in J&K.
- The other two are the Markhor — the world's largest species of wild goat found in Kashmir and several regions of central Asia — and the Tibetan antelope or 'Chiru'.

Various threats

- The biggest challenges which have been identified by experts in the way of conservation and population growth of Hangul are habitat fragmentation, predation and very low fawn-female ratio.
- Lack of desirable breeding and fawn survival is a grave concern for the population growth.
- Another challenge is the male-female and fawn-adult disparity in the Hangul population.
- Influx of livestock herds of nomadic communities in the Dachigam National Park has been a challenge for years.
- After the closing down of their traditional routes leading to over a dozen alpine pastures (in Gurez) by the army after the inception of armed conflict in Kashmir, nomads have not been able to graze their herds in those pastures.
- So, they are taking their large herds of livestock to the upper reaches of Dachigam during summers.
- Other dangers for the Hangul population include excessive predation of fawns by the Common Leopard, the Himalayan Black Bear and nomads' dogs.

DEFENCE

Exercise Varuna 19.1

- The first part of the Indo-French joint naval exercise, Varuna 19.1 is being held off the Goa coast.
- The bilateral naval exercise initiated in 1983 and christened as 'Varuna' in 2001, form a vital part of the Indo-French strategic partnership.
- Having grown in scope and complexity over the years, this exercise exemplifies the strong relations between the two nations, in line with the Joint Strategic Vision of India-French Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The Varuna exercise aims at developing interoperability between the two navies and fostering mutual cooperation by learning from each other's best practices to conduct joint operations.
- The exercise underscores the shared interests and commitment of both nations in promoting maritime security.
- The second part, Varuna 19.2, is scheduled to be held at the end of May in Djibouti.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

When you want to succeed as bad as you want to breathe, then you'll be successful.