



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 23-05-2025**

### **GS-1**

1. Woman in Judiciary

### **GS-3**

2. Climate Physical Risks
3. Asiatic Lion Population Surge in Gujarat 2025
4. Kumki Elephants
5. Grassland ecosystem

## Woman in Judiciary

**Syllabus: GS-2: Gender equality & Judiciary.**

### **Context:**

The judiciary in India plays a pivotal role in upholding the Constitution, ensuring justice, and protecting fundamental rights.

The participation of women in the judiciary is crucial for promoting gender equality, diversity, and a balanced perspective in judicial decision-making.

Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in the Indian judiciary, facing systemic challenges.

### **Historical Context**

- **Initial Absence:** For several decades after independence, the Indian judiciary was male-dominated, with no women judges in the Supreme Court or High Courts until the late 1980s.
- **Milestone:** Justice M. Fathima Beevi became the **first woman judge of the Supreme Court of India** in 1989, marking a historic step toward gender inclusion.
- **Gradual Progress:** Over the years, women like Justice Sujata V. Manohar, Justice Ruma Pal, and Justice Indu Malhotra have made significant contributions to Indian jurisprudence.
- **Recent Developments:** As of 2025, the Supreme Court has seen only **11 women judges** out of over 250 judges since its inception. Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B.V. Nagarathna are among the prominent women judges in recent times.

### **Representation of Women in Judiciary**

- **Supreme Court:**
  - As of May 2025, the Supreme Court has **33 judges** (including the Chief Justice), with only **4 women judges** (approximately 12%).
  - Justice B.V. Nagarathna is set to become the **first woman Chief Justice of India** in 2027, a landmark achievement.
- **High Courts:**
  - Women constitute around **11-13% of High Court judges** across India (data varies by year and state).

- Some High Courts, like the Madras High Court and Delhi High Court, have shown relatively better representation of women judges.
- **Lower Judiciary:**
  - The lower judiciary (district and subordinate courts) has a higher proportion of women, with around **27-30% female judges** in many states.
  - States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu have made efforts to recruit more women judicial officers.
- **Data Points:**
  - According to a 2023 report by the Department of Justice, women make up approximately **28% of judges** in the lower judiciary but only **10% in higher judiciary**.
  - The **collegium system** and lack of transparent criteria have been cited as barriers to women's elevation to higher judicial positions.

### Contributions of Women in Judiciary

- **Landmark Judgments:**
  - **Justice Indu Malhotra:** Played a key role in the **Sabarimala case** (2018), advocating for women's right to enter the temple, emphasizing gender equality under Article 14.
  - **Justice R. Banumathi:** Contributed to judgments on women's rights, including cases related to domestic violence and sexual harassment.
  - **Justice Gyan Sudha Misra:** Strengthened laws on women's property rights and protection against workplace harassment.
- **Gender-Sensitive Perspective:**
  - Women judges bring diverse perspectives, particularly in cases involving gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and family law.
  - Their presence enhances public trust in the judiciary by reflecting inclusivity.
- **Role Models:** Women judges inspire young women to pursue careers in law and public service, contributing to a more equitable legal profession.

### Challenges Faced by Women in Judiciary

- **Underrepresentation:**

- Women are significantly underrepresented in higher judiciary roles due to systemic biases and limited opportunities for elevation.
- The collegium system lacks gender-based affirmative measures, leading to slower promotions for women.
- **Work-Life Balance:**
  - Judicial roles demand long hours, which can disproportionately affect women due to societal expectations around family responsibilities.
  - Lack of institutional support, such as childcare facilities or flexible hours, adds to the challenge.
- **Patriarchal Mindset:**
  - Stereotypes about women's competence in handling complex legal matters persist in some sections of the legal fraternity.
  - Women judges often face scrutiny or bias in male-dominated court environments.
- **Lack of Mentorship:**
  - Limited access to mentorship and networking opportunities hinders career progression for women in the legal field.
- **Appointment Process:**
  - The opaque nature of the collegium system can inadvertently favor male candidates with established networks.
  - No formal policy exists to ensure gender diversity in judicial appointments.
- **Safety and Infrastructure:**
  - Women judges, especially in lower courts, often work in areas with inadequate infrastructure or security, posing challenges to their safety and efficiency.

### Steps Taken to Promote Women in Judiciary

- **Judicial Initiatives:**
  - The Supreme Court has emphasized gender diversity in judicial appointments through various observations and recommendations.
  - In 2021, the Supreme Court's Women Lawyers Association pushed for greater representation of women in higher judiciary roles.

➤ **Government and Policy Measures:**

- The **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)** debate highlighted the need for transparency and diversity in judicial appointments, though it was struck down in 2015.
- Some states have introduced reservation or priority for women in lower judiciary recruitment (e.g., Bihar, Rajasthan).

➤ **Training and Sensitization:**

- Judicial academies like the National Judicial Academy conduct gender sensitization programs for judges.
- Programs like **Vision 2020** by the judiciary aim to enhance inclusivity and diversity.

➤ **Civil Society and Advocacy:**

- Organizations like the **Bar Council of India** and women's lawyer associations advocate for policies to support women in the legal profession.
- Campaigns for **50% reservation for women** in judicial appointments have gained traction in recent years.

### **Constitutional and Legal Framework Supporting Women in Judiciary**

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before the law, forming the basis for gender-neutral judicial appointments.
- **Article 15(3):** Allows the state to make special provisions for women, which can be extended to judicial recruitment.
- **Article 39A:** Promotes equal justice and free legal aid, where women judges play a critical role in ensuring access to justice for marginalized groups.
- **Vishaka Guidelines (1997)** and **POSH Act (2013):** Women judges have been instrumental in implementing and strengthening laws against workplace harassment.

### **Global Perspective**

- Countries like Canada, the UK, and Australia have higher representation of women in their judiciaries (e.g., Canada's Supreme Court has 44% women judges as of 2023).
- India can learn from global best practices, such as transparent appointment processes and affirmative action policies, to enhance women's participation.

## Way Forward

➤ **Affirmative Action:**

- Introduce quotas or priority for women in judicial appointments, especially in the higher judiciary.
- Establish clear criteria for judicial elevations to ensure merit-based but inclusive selections.

➤ **Institutional Support:**

- Provide childcare facilities, flexible work hours, and safe working environments for women judges.
- Strengthen mentorship programs for women lawyers and judicial officers.

➤ **Gender Sensitization:**

- Mandatory training for judges and court staff to eliminate biases and promote a gender-sensitive judicial environment.

➤ **Transparent Appointment Process:**

- Reform the collegium system to include diversity metrics and public accountability.
- Publish data on gender representation in the judiciary annually.

➤ **Encouraging Women in Legal Education:**

- Promote scholarships and opportunities for women in law schools to build a pipeline for future women judges.

➤ **Public Awareness:**

- Highlight the contributions of women judges through media and public campaigns to inspire more women to join the judiciary.

## Conclusion

The inclusion of women in the judiciary is not just a matter of representation but a necessity for ensuring justice, equality, and diversity in India's legal system. While progress has been made, systemic challenges like underrepresentation, patriarchal biases, and lack of institutional support persist.

## **Climate Physical Risks**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Environment - Climate change and its impact**

### **Context:**

India faces climate crisis. Rising temperatures and erratic monsoons threaten its population and economy. The World Bank reports that over 80% of India's districts are at risk from climate-induced disasters.

### **India and the Climate Crisis: An Overview**

#### **Climate Challenges in India**

- **High vulnerability:** Over **80% of India's districts** are at risk from climate-induced disasters (*World Bank*).
- **Examples of risks:**
  - **Floods in the Northeast.**
  - **Heat-induced crop failures** in central India.
- **Implications:** Threatens both **population welfare** and **economic stability**.

#### **Understanding Climate Physical Risks (CPRs)**

- **Definition:** CPRs include both **acute shocks** and **chronic stresses**:
  - **Acute:** Floods, heatwaves.
  - **Chronic:** Shifting monsoon patterns, prolonged droughts.
- **Significance:** Affects **public health, agriculture, and infrastructure**.
- **Key Distinction:**
  - **Short-term** → weather forecasts.
  - **Long-term** → climate projections (essential for planning and policymaking).

#### **Mitigation vs Adaptation**

- **Mitigation:** Reducing greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., renewable energy).
- **Adaptation:** Preparing for unavoidable impacts (e.g., flood-resilient infrastructure).
- **Economic rationale:**
  - **UNEP:** \$1 spent on adaptation yields a **\$4 return**.

- Adaptation increasingly relevant for **both developing and developed nations**.

### Framework for Assessing CPRs

- Based on **IPCC model**:
  1. **Hazard** – Nature and intensity (e.g., floods, cyclones).
  2. **Exposure** – People and assets at risk.
  3. **Vulnerability** – System's ability to withstand/recover.
- **Risk** = *Hazard* × *Exposure* × *Vulnerability*.

### Evolving Regulatory Landscape

- **Global trend**: Shift towards **mandatory climate risk disclosures**.
  - Example: **IFRS ISSB S2** standards.
- **India's approach**:
  - **RBI**: Incorporating climate risk into financial regulations.
  - **Implication**: Climate risk is now **a business continuity issue**.

### Gaps in India's Climate Risk Assessment

- **Fragmentation**:
  - Multiple agencies using **different methodologies**.
- **Lack of centralized data**:
  - Inhibits **evidence-based decision-making**.
- **Technical limitations**:
  - Inaccuracies in **global climate models** reduce reliability of localized projections.

### Steps Towards Better Adaptation Planning

- **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)**:
  - Aligned with **Paris Agreement (Article 7)**.
  - First report submitted in 2023.
  - Targets **9 thematic sectors** at **district level**.



➤ **Limitations:**

- Still lacks a **robust CPR assessment tool** for widespread application.

**Recommendations and Future Directions**

➤ **Need for a CPR Tool Tailored to India:**

- Should integrate:
  - **Localized climate models.**
  - **A centralized climate risk data hub.**
  - **Transparent, science-based methodologies.**

➤ **Goal:** Enable **resilient and sustainable development** across sectors.

**Conclusion**

India's vulnerability to climate change demands urgent attention. While progress is underway via regulatory reforms and the National Adaptation Plan, a **unified, science-driven framework** for climate risk assessment is vital. Bridging this gap will ensure **informed policies, resilient infrastructure, and secure livelihoods.**

## **Asiatic Lion Population Surge in Gujarat 2025**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Wildlife Conservation – Census.**

**Context:**

The Asiatic lion population in Gujarat has experienced a remarkable increase, reaching an estimated 891 individuals as of May 2025. This is rise from 674 lions recorded in the previous census conducted in 2020.

**Asiatic Lion Census 2025 – Key Highlights**

**Location:** Gujarat, India

**Species:** Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*)

**Census Year:** 2025 (16th Census)

**Population:**

- **2025:** 891 lions

- **2020:** 674 lions
- **Increase:** 217 lions (~32% rise)

### Census Details

- **Dates:** May 10 to 13, 2025
- **Area Covered:** ~35,000 sq km across 58 talukas in 11 districts (Saurashtra region)
- **Participants:** ~3,000 officials and volunteers
- **Phases:** Preliminary assessment + Final enumeration

### Population Breakdown

- **Males:** 196
- **Females:** 330
- **Sub-adults:** 140
- **Cubs:** 225
- **In Gir National Park:** 384
- **Outside Gir:** 507

### Expanded Habitat

Lions are now distributed across a wider range beyond traditional habitats:

- **Protected areas:** Gir, Mitiyala, Pania, Girnar, Barda
- **New regions:** Non-forested and coastal zones of Saurashtra
- **Largest Pride:** 17 lions in Bhavnagar district
- **Significance:** Indicates adaptability and habitat expansion

### Census Methodology

- **Direct Beat Verification:** Enhances accuracy
- **Technology Used:**
  - High-resolution cameras
  - Camera traps
  - GPS-enabled radio collars
- **Recorded Data:** Time, movement direction, physical traits, location

### Conservation Significance

- **Success Indicator:** Reflects effective protection and breeding programs
- **Challenges:**
  - Increased lion presence outside protected areas
  - Potential human-wildlife conflict
- **Need:** Strengthened habitat management and conflict mitigation strategies

### Future Implications

- **Human-Wildlife Coexistence:** Requires proactive policies
- **Monitoring:** Continued use of technology and volunteer engagement
- **Planning:** Corridor creation, prey base management, awareness programs

### Conclusion:

The remarkable growth in the Asiatic lion population is a testament to Gujarat's conservation success. However, the expanded range demands holistic strategies to ensure sustainable coexistence and long-term survival of this majestic species.

## Kumki Elephants

**Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Man-Animal Conflict.**

**Context:**

### Kumki Elephants – UPSC Notes

- Karnataka transferred **4 trained Kumki elephants** to **Andhra Pradesh**.

### What Are Kumki Elephants?

- **Definition:** *Kumki* elephants are **captive Asian elephants trained** for wildlife conflict mitigation.
- **Etymology:** The term “Kumki” is derived from **Persian**, meaning “**helper**”.
- **Specialisation:** Trained to remain calm and **obey only their mahouts** during tense situations.
- **Use:** Unique to India, especially southern states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala.

## Roles & Responsibilities

- **Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation:**
  - Drive wild elephants back to forest areas.
  - Prevent crop and property damage.
- **Rescue Operations:**
  - Help extract wild elephants from **wells, mud pits, or man-made structures**.
- **Support in Wildlife Translocation and Medical Care.**

## Role of Mahouts

- **Mahout = Elephant Handler**
- Build **lifelong bond** with the elephant.
- Responsible for:
  - **Training** and command obedience.
  - **Daily care:** food, bathing, health monitoring.
  - Reading subtle **body cues** to prevent aggressive outbursts.
- Crucial for the **success of operations involving Kumkis**.

## Significance in Conservation

- **Non-violent approach** to mitigate conflicts.
- Reduces:
  - Human fatalities
  - Elephant deaths due to electrocution, poaching, retaliation.
- Builds **community trust** in forest department interventions.
- Useful in **landscape-level conservation strategies**.

## Celebrated Kumki Elephants

- **Kaleem** (Tamil Nadu) – Retired in 2023 after 60 years of service.
- Widely respected; received a **ceremonial farewell**.

## Why the Transfer to Andhra Pradesh?

- Rise in **human-elephant conflict** in **Chittoor, Annamayya, and Nandyal districts**.

- Lack of trained kumkis in AP Forest Department.
- Karnataka has surplus trained elephants and **inter-state cooperation** benefits both.

### Challenges

- **Training new Kumkis** takes years and specialized resources.
- **Declining number of skilled mahouts.**
- **Ethical concerns** over keeping elephants in captivity.

### Prelims Facts

- *Kumki* = trained captive elephant used to handle wild elephants.
- Native to **South India** (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala).
- Work under the supervision of **Forest Departments**.
- Require a **strong bond with mahout** to function effectively.

### Mains Answer Writing – Points to Highlight

- Link with **SDG-15 (Life on Land)** and **human-wildlife coexistence**.
- Importance of **traditional ecological knowledge** (mahouts).
- Model for **inter-state cooperation** in wildlife conservation.
- Can be part of a **Case Study** under: **GS Paper 3: Environment and Ecology & Essay:** "Coexistence with Nature"

## Grassland Ecosystem

**Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Grassland ecosystem.**

### Context:

Dr. Mahesh Sankaran, explained the evolution, diversity and conservation challenges of the grassland ecosystem during his lecture The Untold Story of Grasses held recently at the Science Gallery Bengaluru.

### Importance and Role of Grasslands in the Biosphere

- **Second most widespread habitat** on Earth.
- Grasslands are essential for:

- Evolution of **ungulates and herbivores** (dependent on grass for diet).
- Supporting **biodiversity** and maintaining **ecosystem balance**.
- Over **12,000 grass species** globally; **10% found in India**.
- **35 species of grasses** have been **domesticated**.
  - 17% of cultivated crops are grasses (e.g., **rice, wheat, maize**).
- Grasses contribute significantly to:
  - **Nutrient cycles, carbon sequestration**, and the **global food system**.
  - Use in daily life: **bamboo** used in **construction, roof thatching, brooms**, and **alcohol production**.

### Historical Evolution

- Grasslands evolved **over 100 million years ago**.
- First evidence from **grass fossilised in dinosaur teeth**.

### Human and Ecological Significance

- Played a crucial role in the **evolution of human society**.
- Support **livestock-based economies** and **subsistence agriculture**.
- **Savannas and grasslands** contributed to early human development and migration.

### Conservation Challenges in India

- **Misclassification as 'wastelands':**
  - A **colonial legacy** where non-forested, non-revenue-generating land was termed wasteland.
  - Still prevalent in current administrative classifications.
- **Lack of legal protection:**
  - Easier conversion for **non-conservation land use**.
- **Public perception issues:**
  - **Bio-awareness disparity** – greater value placed on **trees** than grasslands.
  - Grasslands often seen as empty or unused land.
- **Tree plantations in grasslands:**

- Introduced to combat CO<sub>2</sub> but often **fail ecologically**.
- Such interventions ignore the ancient, **native nature of grasslands**.
- **Loss of habitat:**
  - **70% of grassland habitats** in the **Western Ghats** lost over the **last century**.

### Way Forward

- Increase **public awareness** and **appreciation** of grasslands.
- Recognise grasslands as vital **ecosystems**, not wastelands.
- Implement **science-based conservation policies**.
- Avoid **invasive afforestation projects** in natural grassland areas.

### Quote to Remember (Can be used in Essay or Ethics Paper)

“Grass is more than just a patch of green below your feet.” – Dr. Mahesh Sankaran