



# IAS PARLIAMENT

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A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

## Prelim Bits 16-07-2018

### World Customs Organisation (WCO)

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- India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of WCO for a period of two years (2018-2020).

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- WCO established in 1952, is an **independent intergovernmental body** whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.

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- WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters.

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- It represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.

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- The organisation has divided its membership into six regions. Each of the regions is represented by an elected vice-chairperson to the WCO council.

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- It is considered as the voice of the International Customs community.

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### Social Media Communication Hubs

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- The Supreme Court recently took a strong note of the social media communication hub proposed by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

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- It is a hub for monitoring online data and will be setup in each district across the country.

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- Using this analytical tool, the Centre wishes to **track social media movements** in every district of the country to predict a global public perception.
- It may also help in tackling fake news and the Centre will gauge people's reactions to their schemes and strategies.
- The SC has observed that it would result in creating a surveillance state.

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## MeerKAT radio telescope

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- MeerKAT telescope is a scientific mega-project in South Africa.
- It will be an array of 64 interlinked receptors to unlock cosmic conundrums from dark energy to detecting extraterrestrial life.
- A receptor is the complete antenna structure, with the main reflector, sub-reflector and all receivers, digitisers and other electronics installed.
- It will be incorporated into the complex Square Kilometre Array (SKA) instrument.
- It is the biggest radio telescope of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

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## Golden Jackel

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- Destruction of mangrove cover in the Bandar Reserve Forest is forcing the golden jackal out of its habitat.
- The conservation status of the animal is the '**least concern**' and it preys on wild crab and fish.
- The Golden Jackal is widespread in North and north-east Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Eastern Europe and the entire Indian Subcontinent.
- In India, jackal populations achieve high densities in pastoral areas such as

Kutch, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Haryana.

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- It is present in all protected areas of India except for those in the high elevation regions of the Himalayas.

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- The species is included in CITES Appendix III (in India).

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- Jackals feature on Schedule III of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) of India and are afforded the least legal protection (mainly to control trade of pelts and tails).

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## Harrier birds

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- Harrier birds are **migratory raptor species** that regularly visits vast swathes of India.

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- India has one of the largest roosting sites in the world for Pallid Harriers and Montagu's Harriers.

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- Recent reports highlights that the numbers of birds visiting the site are declining.

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- While a general declining trend was observed in all the monitored sites, researchers noted the most dramatic changes at the **Rollapadu Bustard Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district**.

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- In Hessarghatta on the outskirts of Bengaluru, Western Marsh Harriers declined significantly, leaving the area nearly deserted.

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- The gravest concern is the **loss of grasslands**, either to urbanisation or to agriculture.

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- Excessive use of pesticides in farms in and around the roosting sites could also be a reason for the lowered population counts.

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**Source: The Hindu, PIB**

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