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TODAY'S ANALYSIS

(06 February 2025)

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- WHY IS WHALE VOMIT WORTH MILLIONS?
- NGT RESTRAINS INFRA PROJECTS IN KOLLERU LAKE
- ADAPTATION FUND IN INDIA
- MCQs

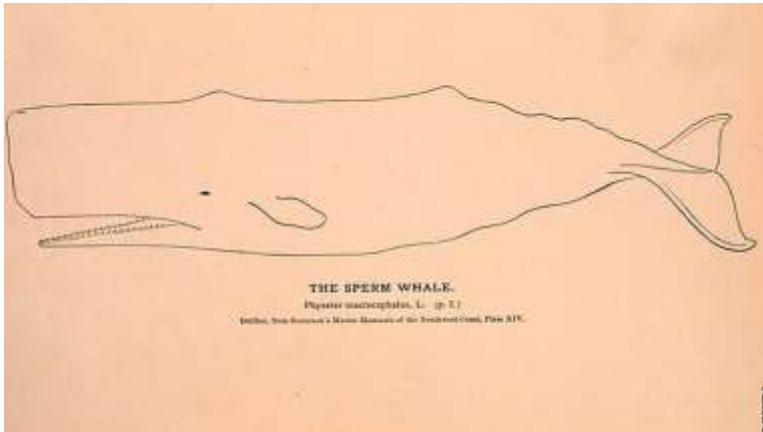


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WHY IS WHALE VOMIT WORTH MILLIONS?



- **Ambergris, a waxy substance produced by sperm whales, is a highly expensive natural material.**
- Often referred to as "floating gold," it's a substance that goes from being a byproduct of whale digestion to an ingredient in high-end perfumes.
- This unique journey and its rarity contribute to its **multi-million dollar value.**

WHAT IS AMBERGRIS AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Ambergris: The 'Floating Gold'

- ***Ambergris*, meaning "grey amber" in French, is a waxy substance that originates in the digestive system of protected sperm whales.**

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- It is often wrongly referred to as whale vomit, though it is not the result of vomiting.
- Sperm whales consume large quantities of squid and cuttlefish, much of which cannot be digested.
- While some of this indigestible matter is expelled through vomiting, a portion binds together in the whale's intestines, eventually forming ambergris.
- Occasionally, ambergris is excreted and found floating in the sea.
- However, it can sometimes grow so large that it ruptures the whale's intestines, leading to the whale's death

FROM SOFT WAXY TO ROCK LIKE TREASURE

- **Freshly expelled ambergris:** Soft, waxy, and greasy consistency.
- **Transformation over time:** Exposed to sunlight, saltwater, and air, it undergoes weathering and oxidation.
- **Hardened form:** Outer layers become crusty and rock-like, while the inside may retain some of its softer, waxier texture. This is the form typically found washed ashore.

WHY IS AMBERGRIS SO EXPENSIVE?

- Ambergris is a rare substance that is highly sought after in the perfume industry.

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- It is **used as a fixative**, which means that it **helps to make fragrances last longer on the skin**.
- This **ability to enhance and prolong scent** makes it a **highly desirable** ingredient in **high-end perfumes**, which drives its price up significantly.
- Depending on its quality, ambergris can **fetch prices up to \$40,000 per kilogram**.

LEGAL COMPLICATIONS

- **Legal Status:**
 - **Legal in some countries** (e.g., **United Kingdom, New Zealand, France, Switzerland, and Maldives**).
 - **Illegal in others, including India.**
- **India: Sale and trade of ambergris are strictly prohibited** under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- **Reason for prohibition:** Sperm whales, the **source of ambergris**, are an **endangered species protected by law**. They were **declared endangered in 1970 due to hunting** and environmental threats.
- **Purpose of the ban:** To protect sperm whales and discourage any activity that could harm or endanger the whale population.

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ABOUT SPERM WHALES

- Sperm whales, also known as *cachalots*, are the largest of the toothed whale species.
- The name "sperm whale" derives from *spermaceti*, a waxy substance found in their heads that helps them to focus sound waves, playing a key role in their deep-sea hunting strategies.
- **Distribution:** found in almost all marine regions.
- **Habitat:** They inhabit deep marine waters (generally deeper than 1000 meters).
- **Threats:** Major threats to sperm whales include fishing activities and marine pollution.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix I (prohibits international trade)
- **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule II (protected species)
- **CMS:** Appendix I (listed under the Convention on Migratory Species)

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NGT RESTRAINS INFRA PROJECTS IN KOLLERU LAKE

Background of the Issue:

- Recently, The Southern Zonal Bench of the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** issued a directive restraining the **Andhra Pradesh Government** from proceeding with **six major** infrastructure projects in the **Kolleru wetland**.
- The decision came after the projects were proposed in the region under the **A.P. Krishna - Kolleru Salinity Mitigation Projects Corporation Limited**, with an estimated total capital outlay of **₹2,952 crore**.

ABOUT KOLLERU LAKE

- Kolleru Lake is a **large, shallow, freshwater lake** in **Andhra Pradesh**.
- It's **between the Krishna and Godavari rivers**, near Eluru. It's the **biggest shallow freshwater lake in Asia**, covering 308 sq km.
- The lake helps to **control flooding from those rivers** and **drains into the Bay of Bengal**.

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- It's a **wildlife sanctuary and a Ramsar site**, home to many migratory birds, including **Siberian cranes**, pelicans, and painted storks.
- It's on the **Central Asian Flyway**, a route many birds use.
- **Over 50,000 water birds live there**, making it an Important Bird Area.

NGT'S DIRECTIVE

- The **Andhra Pradesh government is prohibited** from continuing with the 6 infrastructure projects unless **they are conducted in compliance** with **legal requirements**.
- The **Water Resources Department (WRD)** must **first** secure necessary **environmental clearances** from:
 - **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**
 - **A.P. Coastal Zone Management Authority (CZMA)**
 - **A.P. Pollution Control Board (PCB)**
 - **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**

NATURE OF THE PROJECTS

- The projects, which include the construction of **barrages, regulators, and sluices**, are planned to impact **Kolleru Lake**, a protected **eco-sensitive zone**.

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- Specifically, the projects involve 3 **regulators-cum-roads** across the tidal water channel **Upputeru**, which is part of the **Kolleru ecosystem** and falls under the **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)**.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS RAISED

- A well-known environmental activist challenged the projects on multiple grounds:
 - The projects were initiated without conducting a **scientific or ecological study**.
 - No expert consultation from **wetland conservationists, wildlife specialists, and hydrologists** was undertaken.
 - **Statutory clearances** were not obtained before launching the projects.
 - There were concerns about the potential destruction of the lake's **biodiversity** and **aquatic habitats**.

NGT'S RULING

- **After hearing both parties**, the NGT emphasized the importance of evaluating the **ecological and hydrological implications** of the proposed projects thoroughly, especially due to their potential **adverse impacts** on the lake.

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- The **Kolleru Lake** holds immense **ecological significance**, and any destruction could harm its **hydrology and biodiversity**.
- The NGT stressed the need to comply with **domestic environmental laws** and the **Ramsar Convention**, which underscores the importance of maintaining the integrity of vital ecosystems.

ABOUT NGT

Establishment:

- **Established on October 18, 2010**, under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**.

Purpose:

- **Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to:**
 - Environmental protection
 - Conservation of forests and other natural resources
 - Enforcement of any legal right relating to the environment
 - Providing relief and compensation for damages to persons and property.

KEY FEATURES

- **Specialized Body:** Equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.

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- **Procedure:** Not bound by the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**, but **guided by principles of natural justice.**
- **Objective:** To provide speedy environmental justice and **reduce the burden of litigation in higher courts.**
- **Timeframe:** Mandated to endeavor for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing.

LOCATION

- **Principal Place of Sitting:** New Delhi
- **Other Places of Sitting:** Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai.
- **Accessibility:** Will follow a circuit procedure to make itself more accessible.

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ADAPTATION IN INDIA

- **Adaptation refers to the process of adjusting systems, practices, and policies to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.**
- **This is critical for nations like India, which is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including floods, droughts, and extreme weather events.**
- The **Economic Survey 2024-25** of India emphasized the importance of **climate adaptation**, yet it highlighted the lack of **international climate finance** for adaptation actions.
- It calls for **stronger national support but**, ironically, the **2025-26 Union Budget** provides little focus on this.

UNION BUDGET 2025-26 & CLIMATE ADAPTATION

- In the **Budget 2025-26**, climate change and adaptation were given limited attention:
 - The term '**climate**' was mentioned **only 3 times**, but '**adaptation**' was **not mentioned once**.
 - Other critical terms like '**global warming**' and '**climate change**' were absent, despite **India's ranking** as the **7th most vulnerable country** to climate impacts globally.

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- The speech only mentioned **'resilience'** in a vague context, without specific measures tied to addressing climate change impacts.
- This **raises concerns about the adequacy of India's national efforts**, given the severe and growing risks posed by climate change to the country's **economy, society, and livelihoods**.

CHALLENGES IN FINANCING ADAPTATION

- **Adaptation is not simply a sector-specific issue**; it affects **agriculture, water resources, health, and livelihoods**.
- **However, adaptation policies are often mistakenly treated as part of general development** rather than a focused effort on climate resilience.
- Under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, several adaptation schemes, such as the **National Adaptation Fund (NAF)**, **National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS)**, and **Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)**, were significantly **underfunded** in the **2025-26 budget**.
 - These schemes were **shifted from 'scheme' to 'non-scheme' status** and placed under the **secretariat budget without specific allocations**, signaling a lack of dedicated funding for these crucial areas.

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NATIONAL ADAPTATION FUND & ITS IMPACT

- **NAF** was designed to fund adaptation projects in vulnerable states, with a particular focus on **agriculture** and **animal husbandry**. However:
 - Since **2022-23**, there has been **no budget allocation** for the fund, undermining its critical role in addressing adaptation needs.
 - In a **Press Information Bureau (PIB)** update (**August 2024**), it was revealed that the **NAFCC** (National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change) **has been reduced to a non-scheme without clear reasons**.
 - This raises questions about the **commitment** to adaptation in India.
 - A notable project under NAFCC, **Climate Resilient Interventions in Dairy Sector** in Andhra Pradesh, faced multiple **implementation challenges**, such as delays in land acquisition and resource management, undermining its potential impact.

REVISED MISSIONS & DECREASED ALLOCATIONS

- **The National Coastal Mission**, aimed at sustainable coastline management, had its **budget drastically cut from Rs 8 crore to Rs 2 crore**, demonstrating reduced priority for coastal adaptation.

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- Similarly, the **O-SMART** scheme under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**, crucial for studying the Indian Ocean's changes and improving **weather forecasting models**, **received no allocation in 2024-25 and 2025-26**.
- This is concerning as better data is needed for **climate change predictions** and **disaster management**.

A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT: MISSION MAUSAM

- **Mission Mausam** launched in **September 2024**, is a significant step toward **climate resilience**.
- With a budget allocation of **Rs 2,000 crore (2024-2026)**, it aims to make India a '**Weather-ready and Climate-smart**' nation. The key elements of Mission Mausam are:
 - **50 Doppler Weather Radars (DWR)** and **100 disdrometers** to improve **weather forecasting** and climate resilience.
 - Establishment of **research stations** for continuous monitoring of weather patterns and extreme weather events across the nation.
- This initiative **aims to improve early warning systems** and strengthen community resilience to the **increasingly erratic weather patterns** caused by global warming.

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NATIONAL MISSION FOR GREEN INDIA: AN UPTICK IN FUNDING

- The **National Mission for Green India (NMGI)** received an **increase in allocation to Rs 220 crore for 2025-26 (up from Rs 160 crore in 2024-25)**. The mission focuses on:
 - **Afforestation and fire prevention** efforts across India.

This increase signals a **positive shift** in recognizing the need for natural **carbon sequestration** and ecosystem-based adaptation, which are essential for climate resilience.

THE NEED FOR FURTHER ACTION

- Despite some positive steps like **Mission Mausam** and increased funding for **NMGI**, **India's adaptation strategy** still lacks sufficient focus, funds, and a comprehensive approach to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.
- The **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**, which was introduced in **2008**, has **not been updated** to reflect the **new climate realities**, especially as the impacts of climate change intensify across sectors.
- **Dedicated funding** for programs such as **NAFCC**, **O-SMART**, and **National Coastal Mission** is needed to ensure that adaptation is not an afterthought but a core priority in India's development framework.

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MCQs

1. Consider the following Assertion and Reasoning statements and mark the correct ones:

Assertion (A): Whale Vomit is extremely expensive.

Reasoning (R): It is a rare substance excreted by sperm whales used as a fixative in perfume industry.

- (A) Both A & R are true and R is the correct explanation of A
- (B) Both A & R are true and R is not the correct explanation of A.
- (C) A is true R is false.
- (D) A is false & R is true.

Ans. (A)

2. The Kolleru Lake lies between which two rivers?

- (A) Krishna & Kaveri
- (B) Krishna & Bhima
- (C) Godavari & Sabari
- (D) Krishna & Godavari

Ans. (D)

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3. Consider the following statements wrt National Green Tribunal & mark the correct one:

1. It is a statutory body established to handle environment related cases.
2. It is bound by the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2
(C) Both 1 & 2
(D) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans. (A)

4. Which of these sectors/domains can be affected by adaptation to climate change?

1. Water Systems
2. Agriculture
3. Healthcare
4. Livelihoods

- (A) Only 1 & 2
(B) Only 1,2 & 3
(C) Only 2 & 3
(D) All of the above

Ans. (D)

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5. The O SMART scheme is under which ministry?
- (A) Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change
 - (B) Ministry of Earth Science
 - (C) Ministry of Science & Technology
 - (D) None of the above

Ans. (B)



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