

**GOVERNANCE****UNESCO Global Geoparks**

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is making efforts to get recognition of a geopark for Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) consisting of Erra Matti Dibbalu (red sand dunes), natural rock formations, Borra Caves and volcanic ash deposits.

While there are 161 UNESCO Global geoparks spread across 44 countries, India is yet to have one of its own.

**Key Points****Meaning:**

- These are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

**Features:****Management:**

- These are managed by a body having legal existence recognized under national legislation.
- It needs to be noted that UNESCO Global Geopark status does not imply restrictions on any economic activity inside a UNESCO Global Geopark where that activity complies with indigenous, local, regional and/or national legislation.

**Visibility:**

Geoparks are sustained through geo tourism activities like excursions, nature trails, guided tours, hiking and academic meets.

**Networking:**

- Cooperating with the local people (bottom-up approach) living in the geopark area and with other UNESCO Global Geoparks through the Global Geoparks Network (GGN).
- GGN, of which membership is obligatory for UNESCO Global Geoparks, is a legally constituted not-for-profit organisation with an annual membership fee. It was founded in 2004.

**Designation Period:**

A UNESCO Global Geopark is given this designation for a period of four years after which the functioning and quality of each UNESCO Global Geopark is thoroughly re-examined during a revalidation process.

**Global Geoparks vs Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites:**

- Besides UNESCO Global Geoparks, there are other two UNESCO site designations, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites.
- Biosphere Reserves focus on the harmonised management of biological and cultural diversity.
- Out of 18 notified biosphere reserves, India has 12 biosphere reserves under the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), the latest one included is Panna Biosphere Reserve.
- World Heritage Sites promote the conservation of natural and cultural sites of outstanding universal value.
- India has 38 world heritage sites, including 30 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site. The latest one included is Jaipur city, Rajasthan.
- UNESCO Global Geoparks give international recognition for sites that promote the importance and significance of protecting the Earth's geodiversity through actively engaging with the local communities.
- India does not have any UNESCO Global geopark.

**UNESCO**

- UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.
- UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.
- UNESCO-IOC (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission) is leading a global effort to establish ocean-based tsunami warning systems as part of an overall multi-hazard disaster reduction strategy.
- Recently, UNESCO-IOC approved the recognition of two communities of Odisha viz., Venkatrapur and Noliasahi as Tsunami Ready Communities.
- It has 193 Members and 11 Associate Members. India joined UNESCO in 1946.
- In 2019, the USA and Israel formally quit UNESCO.
- It is headquartered in Paris, France.

**Visakhapatnam's Case  
Important Sites:**



**Erra Matti Dibbalu:**

- It is coastal red sediment mounds located between Visakhapatnam and Bheemunipatnam.
- The width of sandy red dunes vary from 200 metres to two kilometres, spread across five kilometres along the coast.
- Such sand deposits have only been reported from two other low latitude tropical regions in South Asia — the Teri Sands of Tamil Nadu and Red Coastal Sands of Sri Lanka.
- It is among the 34 notified National Geological Heritage Monument Sites of India by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- The term geological heritage is used for natural geological or geo-morphological features that have aesthetic, intrinsic or scientific and educational value, that provide unique insight into geological processes affecting the formation or evolution of Earth.

**Natural Rock Formations (Eastern Ghats) at Mangamaripeta:**

- One example is the natural arch at Mangamaripeta beach opposite the Thotlakonda Buddhist Site.
- It is likely to date back to the period after the last Ice Age around 10,000 years ago and is similar to the natural rock arch of Silathoranam in the Tirumala Hills.

**Borra Caves:**

- Discovered by William King George of the GSI, these one million year old caves attract a huge number of tourists every day. These are located at an elevation of 1400 m above sea level.
- These caves are known for stalactite and stalagmite formations such as Shiva-Parvathi, Rishi's Beard, Mother-Child, Crocodile, Human Brain, Tiger and Cows udder.

**Volcanic Ash Deposits:**

These are said to have originated from the volcanic eruption of Toba in Indonesia 73,000 years ago near Araku (Andhra Pradesh).

**Concerns:**

- Red sands are being exploited for construction activity. Further, degradation due to human interference such as digging, climbing, littering are affecting their stability and exacerbating erosion.
- The recent incident of overcrowding and reckless acts of visitors endangering the natural arch has raised concerns among geologists and heritage activists on the need to safeguard the sites of the region and establish a geo park.

**Conservation Efforts:**

- In July 2019, INTACH organised a campaign to create public awareness on geologically and culturally important spots in the region.
- INTACH was founded in 1984 in New Delhi with the vision to spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India.

**BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project**

- Recently, various green collectives and environmental organisations have come together to protest against the Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project in Kerala.
- The site of the project is not far from the Athirapally Hydel Electric Project.

**Key Points**

**About the Project:**

- It will come up in the buffer zone of the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve (PTR) and will also create a 5.617-km-long tunnel within the forest.

**Concerns:**

**Environmental Consequences:**

- Around 20 hectares of forest land will have to be cleared out and around 1900 large trees and a larger number of small trees will be cut.
- The area is ecologically fragile, as seen in the massive landslide followed by minor landslides at the project site in 2018, and the consequences will extend to loss of precious flora and fauna species.

**Absence of Consent:**

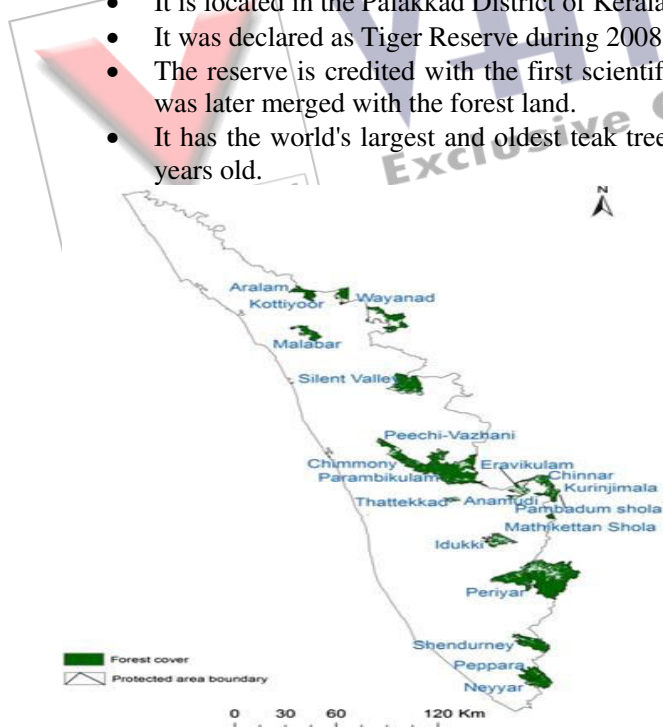
- It was granted approval without obtaining permission from the local Kadar tribe which holds the right of Community Forest Resources (CFR) as per the Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- The site of the hydel project comes within the 400 sq kms of forest land that were given as CFR to the Kadar tribe which has the responsibility to protect and conserve the habitat.

**Athirapally Hydel Electric Project**

- In June 2020, the Kerala government approved the Athirapally Hydro Electric Project (AHEP) on the Chalakudy river in Thrissur district of Kerala.
- Chalakudy River originates in the Anamalai region of Tamil Nadu and is joined by its major tributaries Parambikulam, Kuriyarkutti, Sholayar, Karapara and Anakayam in Kerala. It flows through Palakkad, Thrissur and Ernakulam districts of Kerala.
- It has also been facing opposition and protests due to its adverse effects on the fragile river ecosystem at Athirapally and the other related environmental threats.

**Parambikulam Tiger Reserve**

- It is a well protected ecological portion in the Nelliampathy-Anamalai landscape of the Southern Western Ghats in India.
- It is located in the Palakkad District of Kerala.
- It was declared as Tiger Reserve during 2008-09.
- The reserve is credited with the first scientifically managed teak plantation in the world which was later merged with the forest land.
- It has the world's largest and oldest teak tree named "Kannimara", which is believed to be 350 years old.



**INDIAN ECONOMY**

**Open Acreage Licensing Policy**

Recently, contracts for 11 oil and gas blocks offered under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) Bid Round-V were signed.

**Key Points**

**OALP:**

- The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) replacing the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was approved in March 2016 and the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) along with the National Data Repository (NDR) were launched in June 2017 as the key drivers to accelerate the Exploration and Production (E&P) activities in India.
- Under OALP, companies are allowed to carve out areas they want to explore oil and gas in. Companies can put in an expression of interest for any area throughout the year but such interests are accumulated thrice in a year. The areas sought are then put on auction.
- The successful roll-out of the HELP regime, followed by OALP Bid Rounds, has led to an increase in exploration acreages in India.
- The exploration acreage which stood at about 80,000 sq. km. from earlier regimes now stands at approx. 2,37,000 sq. km., post the award of blocks under OALP Round-V.
- The OALP has helped in removing red-tapism and brought in a quantum jump in the Exploration & Production sector.

**Concerns:**

- Inadequate Role of Private Players: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India (OIL) have won all the 11 blocks offered in the latest bidding round for oil and gas exploration blocks.
- The lack of interest from private players in recent rounds of OALP bidding has been a result of a lack of policy clarity from the government and unsuitable taxation and regulatory conditions.
- A proposal by the Petroleum Ministry to reduce the oil cess charge on domestic production of crude has been rejected by the Finance Ministry.
- Limited Participation of Foreign Companies: India's efforts to attract foreign energy giants into hydrocarbon exploration and production haven't been quite fruitful.

**Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy**

- Under this Policy, exploration blocks shall be awarded on a continuous basis through e-bidding in a transparent manner.

**Features:**

- Revenue sharing model instead of Profit sharing for hydrocarbon exploration.
- Under revenue sharing model, the government share accrues immediately on production, unlike in cost-recovery where the contractors first claimed its costs before splitting leftover profits, if any.
- Unified license for all types of hydrocarbons.
- Freedom to carve out acreages of choice under OALP bid rounds.
- Full marketing and pricing freedom of gas.

**National Data Repository**

- NDR is a government-sponsored E&P data bank with state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure for preservation, upkeep and dissemination of data to enable its systematic use for future exploration and development.
- Following are the data that is being stored in NDR: Seismic Data, Well & Log Data, Spatial Data, other data like Drilling, Reservoir, Production, Geological, Gravity & Magnetic etc.
- Having an NDR for India has helped in enhancing prospects of petroleum exploration and facilitating the Bidding Rounds by improving the availability of quality data.

**INDIAN POLITY****C.B.I and Consent of States**

Recently, the Supreme Court has held that once a court takes cognisance of a corruption case investigated by the CBI, it cannot be set aside for lack of the State government's prior consent for the probe against some of the accused, unless it is shown that it has resulted in prejudice.

**Key Points****Background:**

- Two officials of Uttar Pradesh government had earlier contended in the Allahabad High Court that the general consent given by the State government was not enough, and separate consent ought to have been obtained prior to their being investigated.
- The State of Uttar Pradesh has accorded a general consent for extension of powers and jurisdiction of the Members of DSPE, in the whole of State of UP for investigation of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.



- However, in case of public servants under the state governments, prior consent is needed from the state concerned even after the general consent given by the state.
- The Allahabad High Court noted that the Uttar Pradesh government had granted post facto (after the act is done) consent against the two public servants. This very judgement of Allahabad High Court was challenged in the Supreme Court.

**Supreme Court's Stand:**

- It held that if the State had given a general consent to CBI investigation in a corruption case and cognisance had been taken by a court, the case cannot be set aside unless the public servants plead that prejudice has been caused to them on account of non-obtaining of prior consent.
- Further the judges held that the case cannot be set aside unless the illegality in the investigation can be shown to have brought about miscarriage of justice.

**Types of Consent Given by state government**

- There are two types of consent for a probe by the CBI. These are: general and specific.
- When a state gives a general consent (Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act) to the CBI for probing a case, the agency is not required to seek fresh permission every time it enters that state in connection with investigation or for every case.
- When a general consent is withdrawn, CBI needs to seek case-wise consent for investigation from the concerned state government. If specific consent is not granted, the CBI officials will not have the power of police personnel when they enter that state.
- This hurdle impedes seamless investigation by the CBI. A general consent is given to facilitate that seamless investigation in a case of corruption or violence.

**Issue of Withdrawal of general Consent by States:**

- Recently it has been seen that various states like Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal governments have withdrawn their general consent as a result of tussle between Centre and States.

**Impact of withdrawal:**

- It means the CBI will not be able to register any fresh case involving a central government official or a private person stationed in the states who withdrew their general consent, without getting case-specific consent.
- In simple terms withdrawal of general consent simply means that CBI officers will lose all powers of a police officer as soon as they enter the state unless the state government has allowed them.
- It will have no impact on investigation of cases already registered with CBI as old cases were registered when general consent existed.

**Delhi Special Police Establishment Act**

- The Central Bureau of Investigation traces its origin to the Special Police Establishment (SPE) which was set up in 1941 by the Government of India.
- The functions of the SPE then were to investigate cases of bribery and corruption in transactions with the War & Supply Deptt. Of India during World War II.
- Even after the end of the War, the need for a Central Government agency to investigate cases of bribery and corruption by Central Government employees was felt.
- The Delhi Special Police Establishment Act was therefore brought into force in 1946. The CBI's power to investigate cases is derived from this Act.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS****12th BRICS Summit**

The Prime minister of India while addressing the 12th BRICS summit held online touched upon issues like terrorism, Covid-19 pandemic and the need for reforms in global bodies.

Russia was the host and chair of BRICS this year.

**Key Notes****India's Stand at the Summit:****Terrorism:**

- Need to confront the countries that supported and sponsored terror and ensure that terrorists and those who support and sponsor terrorists should be held guilty and this problem is addressed in a collective manner.
- India acknowledged the Russian support to the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and reiterated its support to the strategy.
- It is well aligned with the Brasilia Declaration which condemned terrorism in all forms and manifestation.

- Earlier this year India's annual resolution on the issue of counter-terrorism was adopted by consensus in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) which also strengthened the war against terrorism.
- United Nation Security Council (UNSC) Reforms:
- India raised the issue of credibility and effectiveness of the institutions that were necessary for global governance, and urged for support from BRICS partners.

**Covid-19 pandemic:**

- India addressed the issue of cooperation among the BRICS countries on the production of vaccines for Covid-19.
- Referring to the post Covid-19 economic hardships of the world, India highlighted the importance of BRICS in that scenario.
- BRICS countries will play a significant role in the recovery of the post Covid-19 world as 42% of the world's population resides in the BRICS countries and the economies are the major engines of the world.
- India also highlighted the scope of increasing trade among the BRICS countries.

**Aatmanirbhar Bharat:**

- India introduced Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) to the BRICS.
- India said that the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign is based on the subject that a self-reliant and resilient India can become a force multiplier for the post Covid-19 world order.
- A self-reliant India would make solid contributions to the global value chains.

**China's Stand:**

- It has offered to cooperate with India and other BRICS nations in the development of vaccines against the coronavirus
- China said it will open the BRICS partnership on a new industrial revolution innovation centre in the Chinese city of Xiamen.
- China supported the BRICS counter-terrorism strategy that called upon on all countries to take steps to prevent the use of their territories for terrorist activities against other countries or their own citizens.
- Also supported the declaration which talked about respect for territorial integrity of Syria, Libya, Iraq and in the context of the United Nations.

**Russia's Stand:**

- Russia called for a joint effort by the BRICS countries on the development of the coronavirus vaccines.
- It also highlighted the importance of establishing a Centre for Development and Research of BRICS vaccines.

**Importance of BRICS Summit for India and China:**

- It provides the Chinese and the Indian leadership an opportunity to exchange their thoughts on key priorities in the backdrop of the continued tension along their borders.
- Both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS have provided recent opportunities for exchange of ideas between the two sides.

**Way Forward**

- BRICS, being one of the pillars of the emerging fairer polycentric world order, plays an important stabilising role in global affairs.
- In the storming ocean of world politics, BRICS can contribute significantly in maintaining international stability and ensuring global economic growth and becoming a united center of the multipolar world.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM****India's First Green Energy Convergence Project: Goa**

- India's first convergence project to generate green energy for rural and agriculture consumption is set to come up in Goa.
- Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL), a joint venture of PSUs under the Ministry of Power, and Goa government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the same.

**Key Notes****Convergence Project of EESL:**

- Focus: It focuses on energy solutions that lie at the confluence of renewable energy, electric mobility and climate change.
- Objective: It seeks to connect seemingly independent sectors like Solar Energy, Energy Storage and LED lights to provide solutions, which can enable in decarbonisation and affordable energy access.

**Mechanism:**

- EESL is offering convergent interventions, which solve multiple gap areas in the energy ecosystem.
- Solutions such as solarised agriculture feeders, LED street lights in local villages and battery energy storage systems.
- Leveraging the carbon financing mechanism to rapidly strengthen rural infrastructure in a clean and sustainable manner, and to create a resilient and sustainable rural community in India.
- EESL's climate financing interventions currently include Gram UJALA, Decentralised Solar and Gram Panchayat Street Lights programmes.

**Benefits of the Project:**

- Promote Renewable Energy: It will accelerate the usage of renewable energy sources, especially for agricultural and rural power consumption in the State.
- Energy Efficient: Contribute to reduction of peak energy demand through deployment of energy efficient pumping and lighting thus contributing to overall sustainability.
- Improve Health of DISCOMs: Accrue savings of Rs 2,574 crores to the State over the period of 25 years, while improving the health of DISCOMs and providing cleaner power.
- Check Technical Losses: Provide clean day time electricity to farmers as well as energy efficient pump sets which would reduce the power consumption as well as T&D (Transmission and Distribution Losses) losses associated with transmitting power to agriculture and rural feeder networks.

**Energy Efficiency Services Ltd**

- It is a joint venture of National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation and POWERGRID, It was set up under the Ministry of Power to facilitate implementation of energy efficiency projects.
- EESL is a Super Energy Service Company (ESCO) that seeks to unlock the energy efficiency market in India, estimated at Rs. 74,000 crore that can potentially result in energy savings of up to 20% of current consumption, by way of innovative business and implementation models.
- It also acts as the resource centre for capacity building of State DISCOMs, financial institutions, etc.

**Way Forward**

- In a solar power rich country like India, effective harnessing of this abundant resource can yield handsome returns for all stakeholders and therefore initiatives like Convergence can help India to produce more energy at less cost.
- Project Convergence is also well aligned and is in consonance with the International Solar Alliance, an initiative of the Indian government.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Making it legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies can ensure political empowerment of women in India. Comment. (250 words)**

Ans:

Positive discrimination has been often seen as a remedy of under-representation. In the realm of political empowerment of women, legal reservation for women in elected bodies is a viable step that India still needs to embark upon.

**Issue Of Under-Representation**

- Disproportionate to population: Although women are nearly half the population, they make up a mere
- 11.6% of the total strength of Lok Sabha and 11% of the total strength of Rajya Sabha.

**Existing legislative measures**

- The 73rd and 74th Amendment Act of the Constitution reserves one-third of all seats in panchayats and urban local bodies for women.

- The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, proposed to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The Rajya Sabha passed this bill in 2010, but it still hasn't received the Lok Sabha's assent.
- A similar Bill was introduced in 1996, 1998 and 1999 but all of these lapsed after the dissolution of the respective Lok Sabhas.

### **Advantages Of Legally Binding Representation Of Women**

#### **Increased Efficiency: According to a study conducted by UN,:**

- Assembly constituencies with women representatives show significantly higher economic growth than those under their male counterparts.
- Women legislators are significantly less likely than men to be carrying criminal charges.
- Women legislators are slightly younger on average and are less likely than men to exploit their office for personal financial gain.
- Increase in gender sensitivity of legislatures: Greater inclusion of women broadens perspective of debates.
- It also facilitates law making to become more gender equitable.
- More informed decision making: Poor participation of women in Parliament has a direct impact on the priorities and assumptions of policies and legislation.
- There won't be qualitative change in governance with the exclusion of women in decision-making processes.
- Credibility Crisis: Without women legislators, laws cannot reflect contemporary trends in women's education and excellence in varied fields.
- It could decrease the development index ratings of India like gender equality index and Indexes related to inclusion.

#### **Some Issues with Reservation of Women in Elected Bodies**

- Becoming a rubber stamp: Like it has been seen in panchayats where the real power is still wielded by the husbands of the women sarpanches.
- Disparity among women: It is often seen that mostly the privileged women, generally from influential and politically powerful families occupy the women quotas in elected bodies.
- It hinders gender inclusion to percolation to grassroot levels of polity and prevents political inclusion of women from backward sections of society.

#### **Conclusion**

- Legally binding legislation is not a panacea for all gender inequalities but indeed an important step in empowering women politically. It could create role models, improve national leadership to bring positive influence on policy making, governance and make indian polity more democratic.

### **DAILY QUIZ**

1. Which of the following statements are correct about UNESCO Global Geoparks:

1. It gives international recognition for sites that promote the importance of protecting the Earth's geodiversity.
2. The UNESCO Global Geopark status does not imply restriction on any economic activity inside the Global Geopark.
3. India does not have any UNESCO Global Geopark.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3**

2. Which of the following initiatives are launched to fight tuberculosis (TB) in India?

1. Nikshay Ecosystem
2. Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)
3. Saksham Project
4. National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).

Choose the correct answer using code given below:

- a) 1 and 4 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 3 and 4 only



d) **1, 2, 3 and 4**

3. Consider the following statements:

1. Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) is a Revenue sharing model instead of profit sharing for hydrocarbon exploration.
2. The New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) will replace the HELP.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

4. With reference to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), consider the following statements:

1. CBI derives its powers from Delhi Special Police Establishment Act.
2. CBI can suo-moto investigate the case in any state of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 and 2

5. Consider the following statements regarding 'Parambikulam Tiger Reserve':

1. Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project is proposed in its buffer zone.
2. It has the world's oldest teak tree.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 and 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2



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