

ENVIRONMENT**Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty:**

CONTEXT:The Indian Ministry of Earth Science urges United Nations (UN) member nations to remain dedicated to the conservation and preservation of oceans and their biodiversity.

About

- India urges UN Member Nations to support conservation and sustainable economic development under UNCLOS.
- There is a need for determination among states to support global organizations for effective agreement on protection and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.
- There is a need to resolve challenges including focus on funding, intellectual property rights, and institutional mechanisms.
- Member states can work on Capacity building, transfer of marine technology and Environmental Impact Assessment.
- It has also asked to support sustainable economic development and the well-being of coastal people under the United Nation's Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS).
- India has also voiced its support for the high ambition coalition for the early conclusion of the International Legally Binding Instrument – Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) under UNCLOS.
- Adoption of the BBNJ agreement signals international commitment to conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.
- Need for a legal framework aimed at conservation for Vital resources for global seas with more than 60% yet to be managed and regulated.

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ)

- It refers to the marine biodiversity found in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which accounts for more than 60% of the world's oceans.
- It is not regulated by any legal framework aimed at conservation, making it vulnerable to over-exploitation and degradation.

Importance of biodiversity conservation:

- **Ecosystem services:** Biodiversity provides a range of ecosystem services, such as air and water purification, climate regulation, pollination, and soil fertility, which are essential for human well-being.
- **Economic benefits:** Biodiversity supports economic activities such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism, which generate livelihoods and income for millions of people around the world.
- **Medical advances:** Many of the medicines used to treat illnesses and diseases are derived from plants and animals found in nature.
- **Cultural and spiritual values:** It is an integral part of many cultures and religions, and is valued for its aesthetic, recreational, and spiritual benefits.
- **Conservation of endangered species:** Biodiversity conservation helps to protect endangered species and prevent their extinction, which can have far-reaching ecological and social impacts.

Challenges of Biodiversity conservation:

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** Human activities such as deforestation, mining, and land-use change have led to the loss and fragmentation of habitats, which in turn have caused a decline in biodiversity.
- **Climate Change:** Climate change is causing significant changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, leading to alterations in ecosystems, shifts in species' ranges, and changes in the timing of life cycle events.
- **Overexploitation:** Overfishing, hunting, and harvesting of natural resources have resulted in the depletion of many species, with some facing the threat of extinction.
- **Pollution:** Pollution from industrial activities, agriculture, and urbanization has led to the contamination of soil, water, and air, which has adversely affected biodiversity.
- **Invasive Species:** Invasive species, introduced intentionally or unintentionally by humans, can outcompete native species for resources and lead to their decline.

- **Lack of Political Will:** Despite the importance of biodiversity conservation, many governments have not made it a priority, and international efforts have not always been effective due to a lack of political will.
- **Limited Resources:** Conservation efforts require significant financial resources, which may not always be available or allocated adequately.

India's Approach to Biodiversity Management:

- India has been actively involved in the negotiations for the development of an international legally binding instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ under the United Nation's Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS).
- India's legislative framework, the "Biodiversity Act of 2002," reflects the country's commitment to conservation, sustainable usage, and equitable benefit sharing.
- India supports the establishment of new institutions or the strengthening of existing ones with a robust democratic way of functioning.
- India has been focusing on capacity building and transfer of marine technology, and Environmental Impact Assessment.

ABOUT UNCLOS:

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 is an international agreement that establishes the legal framework for marine and maritime activities.
- It is also known as Law of the Sea. It divides marine areas into five main zones namely- Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the High Seas.
- It is the only international convention which stipulates a framework for state jurisdiction in maritime spaces. It provides a different legal status to different maritime zones.
- It provides the backbone for offshore governance by coastal states and those navigating the oceans.
- It not only zones coastal states' offshore areas but also provides specific guidance for states' rights and responsibilities in the five concentric zones.
- While UNCLOS has been signed and ratified by nearly all the coastal countries in the South China Sea, its interpretation is still hotly disputed.
- There is a maritime dispute in the East China Sea as well.

ART AND CULTURE

CONTEXT: Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has presented a report on the findings at the Sangam-era site of Keeladi and their significance.

About

- Keeladi is a village in south Tamil Nadu along the Vaigai river near the temple city of Madurai.



Findings:

- In the eight rounds of excavations, over 18,000 artifacts have been unearthed from the site.
 - Over 120 potsherds containing Tamil Brahmi inscriptions have been found.
 - Spindle whorls, copper needles, terracotta seal, hanging stones of the yarn, terracotta spheres and earthen vessels to hold liquid suggest various stages of a weaving industry
 - Gold ornaments, copper articles, semi-precious stones, shell bangles, ivory bangles and ivory combs reflect the artistic, culturally rich and prosperous lifestyle of the Keeladi people

Significance of findings

- Keeladi and Sangam age:
 - Keeladi’s excavations from 2015 prove that an urban civilisation existed in Tamil Nadu in the Sangam age on the banks of the Vaigai river.
 - The unearthed artifacts from Keeladi belong to a period between sixth century BCE and first century BCE. These findings pushed the Sangam age to 800 BCE.
 - Keeladi adds to the credibility of Sangam Literature.
- Keeladi and IVC:
 - The unearthed Keeladi artifacts have led to conclusion that the site is a part of the Vaigai Valley Civilisation.
 - some of the symbols found in pot sherds of Keeladi bear a close resemblance to signs of Indus Valley.
 - Academics while acknowledging the cultural gap of 1,000 years between the two places, hope that further excavations give a clearer picture about the south Indian iron age that currently links both.

Archaeological Survey of India:

- The ASI is the premier organization for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the country.
- It functions under the Ministry of Culture.
- The prime objection of ASI is to maintain the archaeological sites, ancient monuments, and remains of national importance.
- It regulates all archaeological activities as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- It also regulates the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.

Sangam Age

- The area lying to the south of river Krishna and Tungabhadra experienced a period between the 3rd century B.C. and 3rd century A.D. known as the Sangam Period.
- It has been named after the gathering of poets (Sangam) held during that period under the royal patronage of the Pandya kings of Madurai.
- The sources for this age are largely literary, though archaeological evidence has started to come up.
- Kharavela’s Hatigumpha inscription (155 BCE) provides the earliest epigraphic evidence referring to a confederacy of Tamil states.

Vaigai River

- It originates in the Western Ghats (Varushanad Hills).
- It travels through the Pandya Nadu region of Tamil Nadu.
- Its main tributaries are Suruliyaru, Mullaiyaru, Varaganadhi, Manjalaru, Kottagudi, Kridhumaal and Upparu.
- The Vaigai finally empties into the Palk Strait near the Pamban Bridge in Ramanathapuram district.

PRELIMS

1. MUKAAB:

CONTEXT: Saudi Arabia unveiled its latest grand plan to transform its capital city Riyadh called the Mukaab – “cube” in Arabic.

About:

- The Mukaab is among the ambitious architectural projects planned and undertaken by Saudi Arabia as a part of its Vision 2030, aimed at revolutionising the country's economy and lifestyle.
- It will stand 400 metres high, wide and long, big enough to hold 20 Empire State Buildings.
- The cubic shape of the Mukaab will ensure the ultimate utilisation of space.

Architectural Style:

- The Mukaab will be built using the modern Najdi architectural style – a twist on the traditional Najdi architectural style from the Najd region in the centre of the Arabian Peninsula.
- This architectural style was perfected over generations to be best suited for the region's desert climate – its design focuses on naturally controlling the climate inside the structure.

2. WORLD NGO DAY:

CONTEXT: Every year, 27th February is observed as the World NGO day all over the world.

About: It is an international day dedicated to recognize, celebrate and honour all non-governmental and non-profit organisations, and the people behind them that contribute to the society all year around.

History:

- The World NGO (Non-Governmental Organisations) Day assumed its official status when 12-member countries of the IX Baltic Sea NGO Forum on April 17, 2010 formally recognised it.
- In 2012, the forum's Final Statement Resolution adopted the day.
- Later, in 2014 it was decided that this day would be celebrated as World NGO Day when the United Nations celebrated it.

3. SHIVAMOGGA AIRPORT:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is all set to launch the Shivamogga airport on February 27 which is named after poet Kuvempu in the state of Karnataka. The airport was built for Rs 450 crores. The Passenger Terminal of the airport's main building is in the form of a lotus. It can accommodate more than 300 passengers. Apart from this, PM Modi also laid the foundation stone of two railway projects and a new railway line Shikaripura – Ranebennur. The new railway line will be built at a cost of Rs 990 crores.
- The airport is expected to make air travel convenient for people of Shivamogga district and surrounding areas of central Karnataka.
- The domestic operations will also begin soon in the airport.

Why the airport in Shivamogga?

- Shivmogga or Shimoga lies on the bank of the Tunga river. It is a hilly region and is world-renowned for Siddha and Ayurvedic medicines. Cancer, heart disease, and several other ailments are healed naturally here. People visit the place from foreign countries as well. GoI is to build an airport here to ease transportation.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) while pushing infrastructure projects will also make economic growth more inclusive. Elaborate.

INTRODUCTION: The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) is a group of social and economic infrastructure projects slated to be established over a period of five years with an initial sanctioned amount of 1 102 lakh crore. The NIP was first announced in 2019. National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) takes account projects to be implemented over the next five years (2019-2025) NIP includes both economic and social infrastructure projects. NIP will push for infrastructure projects.

- NIP will push for infrastructure projects through investment across sectors such as energy (24%), roads (18%), urban (17%) and railways (12%)
- It will help realize potential of growing urban economy- in required areas such as redevelopment of slum neighborhoods, urban roads, water supply coverage and quality, wastewater treatment facilities, and urban mobility through public transport
- It will strengthen agricultural and rural infrastructure. Irrigation and rural infrastructure projects would account for 7.7 lakh crore each.
- It will further increase the connectivity in India, especially in rural areas. Road projects will account for Rs. 19.63 lakh crore while another Rs. 13.68 lakh crore would be for railway projects. National Infrastructure Pipeline will also make economic growth more inclusive.

- Economic Survey 2018-19 argues that growth can be sustained by a virtuous cycle approach where investment is the key driver that drives demand, creates capacity, increases labour productivity, generates jobs etc.
- Well-developed infrastructure improves revenue base of the government which can be used for welfare programmes.
- Improved governance: Well-developed infrastructure enhances level of economic activity, creates additional fiscal space by improving revenue base of the government, and ensures quality of expenditure focused on productive areas.
- **Employment:** Well-planned NIP will enable more infrastructure projects, grow businesses, create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, making growth more inclusive. **Improve ease of living:** as in order to fulfill various Sustainable development goals (SDGs), India needs to develop reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure in both regional centers and trans-border areas.
- **Inclusive growth:** Availability of quality infrastructure is a prerequisite to achieve broad-based and inclusive growth on a sustainable basis.

Major constraints in Infrastructure sector:

- Regulatory uncertainty- due to various risks which include procedural delays, lengthy processes in land acquisition, payment of compensations, environmental concerns, lesser traffic growth than expected etc.
- Banks are recovering from NPA problem. If they are pushed to fund for NIP, they may further face NPA crisis.
- Scale of pipeline is massive and its implementation will not be easy.
- Land acquisition is a big challenge for completion of infrastructure projects. Rehabilitation of millions of people will also be not easy.

Conclusion:

- The National Infrastructure Pipeline is an ambitious plan that would include Greenfield and brown field projects costing above Rs 100 crore. It will also enable robust marketing of the pipeline of projects requiring private investment through the India Investment Grid (IIG), National Investment & Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), etc. Well-planned NIP will enable more infrastructure projects, power

MCQs

1. Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), recently seen in the news is the initiative of
 - (a) G20 Countries.
 - (b) **G7 countries.**
 - (c) World Bank.
 - (d) OECD
2. Consider the statement about National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP):
 - 1) NDAP was launched in 2022 by NITI Aayog.
 - 2) Aim to democratize access to public government data.
 Which of the above statement is/are incorrect?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2**
3. Which of the following statement is not correct about Blue Food?
 - (a) Blue food sourced from aquatic environment.
 - (b) It has B12 and omega-3 vitamins.
 - (c) It increases dietary environmental footprint: compared to terrestrial meat, blue food generated higher emissions.**
 - (d) It contributed livelihoods of rural communities.
4. State of World Mangroves 2022 report is released by
 - (a) United nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
 - (b) Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA)

- (c) World Sustainable Development Forum (WSDF)
(d) **None of the above**
5. International Intellectual Property (IP) Index' is released by
a) World Intellectual Property Organization
b) US Chamber of Commerce
c) World Economic Forum
d) World Trade Organization
6. Consider the following statements about 'Mad Cow disease'
1. It is an infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease which causes degeneration in the nervous system of cattle
2. There are certain vaccines to prevent the disease but no treatment exists once the symptoms begin to appear
Select the correct statement(s)
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following statements about 'Himalayan Griffon'
1. It is one of the largest Old World vultures natives to the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau
2. It is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List and is protected under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
Select the correct statement(s)
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. On which day the World NGO day observed all over the world.
(a) 27 February
(b) 26 February
(c) 25 February
(d) 22 February.
9. Consider the following statements with respect to shivamogga Airport ?
I. Shivamogga lies on the bank of tunga river.
II. Its comes under the sagara mala project.
Which of the above statement is are correct ?
(a) Only I
(b) Both I & II
(c) Only II
(d) Neither I nor II
10. The word "MUKAAB" recently in the News what is it ?
(a) An Najdi Architectural Buildings
(b) Tribal groups
(c) Festival of Myanmar
(d) None of these