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Dialy News Pedia

Conservation of Western Ghats

(GS Prelims and Mains 3 – Environment and Biodiversity)

Recent News: The six Western Ghats States, including Kerala, have been restrained by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) from giving environmental clearance to activities that may adversely impact the eco-sensitive areas of the mountain ranges.

The panel directed that the extent of Eco-Sensitive Zones of Western Ghats, which was notified by the Central government earlier, should not be reduced in view of the recent floods in Kerala.

The Madhav Gadgil-led Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) report had created a political furore in the State with most of the political parties and a section of the church opposing it. The Tribunal Bench, in its order, noted that any alteration in the draft notification of zones may seriously affect the environment, especially in view of recent incidents in Kerala. It was on a petition filed by the Goa Foundation that the Bench issued the order.

Western Ghats

The Western Ghats is an extensive region spanning over six States, 44 districts and 142 taluks. It is the home of many endangered plants and animals. Western Ghats host India's richest wilderness in 13 national parks and several sanctuaries.

Recognised by UNESCO as one of the world's eight most important biodiversity hotspots, these forested hills are also sourcing to numerous rivers, including the Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery. The Western Ghats needs high attention in the sustainability aspect of whole India and especially South India. Ministry of Environment and Forests of India set up in March 2010 an expert panel (Gadgil commission) to find a strategy for conserving these Ghats.

Madhav Gadgil Committee Report and Recommendations:

- The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) designated the entire hill range as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).
- The panel, in its report, has classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 and 3.
- ESZ-1 being of high priority, almost all developmental activities (mining, thermal power plants etc) were restricted in it.
- Gadgil report recommended that “no new dams based on large-scale storage be permitted in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1. Since both the Athirappilly of Kerala and Gundia of Karnataka hydel project sites fall in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1, these projects should not be accorded environmental clearance,” it said.
- Gadgil Committee report specifies that the present system of governance of the environment should be changed. It asked for a bottom to top approach (right from

Gram sabhas) rather than a top to bottom approach. It also asked for decentralization and more powers to local authorities.

- The commission recommended constitution of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA), as a statutory authority under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, with the powers under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Kasturirangan committee on the Western Ghats

- Instead of the total area of Western Ghats, only 37% (i.e. 60,000 sq. km.) of the total area be brought under ESA under Kasturirangan report.
- A complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA.
- Distinguished between *cultural* (58% occupied in the Western Ghats by it like human settlements, agricultural fields and plantations) and *natural* landscape (90% of it should come under ESA according to the committee).
- Current mining areas in the ESA should be phased out within the next five years, or at the time of expiry of mining lease, whichever is earlier.
- No thermal power be allowed and hydropower projects are allowed only after detailed study.
- Red industries i.e. which are highly polluting be strictly banned in these areas.
- Kasturirangan report on the Western Ghats has made several pro-farmer recommendations, including the exclusion of inhabited regions and plantations from the purview of ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs).
- The Kasturirangan report had said 123 villages fall under the ESA purview.

V Oommen Committee on the Western Ghats

- The committee recommended the government to make changes in the clauses of Environmentally Fragile Land (EFL) in the Western Ghats.
- The Oommen Committee reported that serious lapses happened in determining the EFL areas. The committee adopted a satellite survey to determine EFL and even plantations and estates were included in it!
- It also recommended stopping land acquisition proceedings according to the Kasturirangan committee report.
- The panel has made several pro-farmer recommendations, including the exclusion of inhabited regions and plantations from the purview of ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs). The Kasturirangan report had said 123 villages fall under the ESA purview.
- The state-level panel said a field survey should be held in places that the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports have identified as ESAs to demarcate forest land and human settlements. After examining the population density of these areas, human settlements should be exempted from the category of ESAs.
- It also said farmers should not be stopped from rearing hybrid varieties of milking animals and suggested that the grace period is given to shift to organic farming be extended from five years to 10 years.
- The report said forest areas should be fenced to prevent the animals straying into it.

Source: The Hindu

Public Credit Registry

(GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian economy)

A public credit registry is an information repository that collects all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers. It helps banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower and accordingly offer attractive interest rates to good borrowers and higher interest rates to bad borrowers.

The move is based on the recommendations of a committee, headed by Y.M. Deosthalee. The committee has suggested the registry should capture all loan information and borrowers be able to access their own history.

Data is to be made available to stakeholders such as banks, on a need-to-know basis. Data privacy will be protected.

Note: Credit information is now available across multiple systems in bits and pieces and not in one window. Data on borrowings from banks, non-banking financial companies, corporate bonds or debentures from the market, external commercial borrowings (ECBs), foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs), masala bonds, and inter-corporate borrowings are **not available** in one data repository.

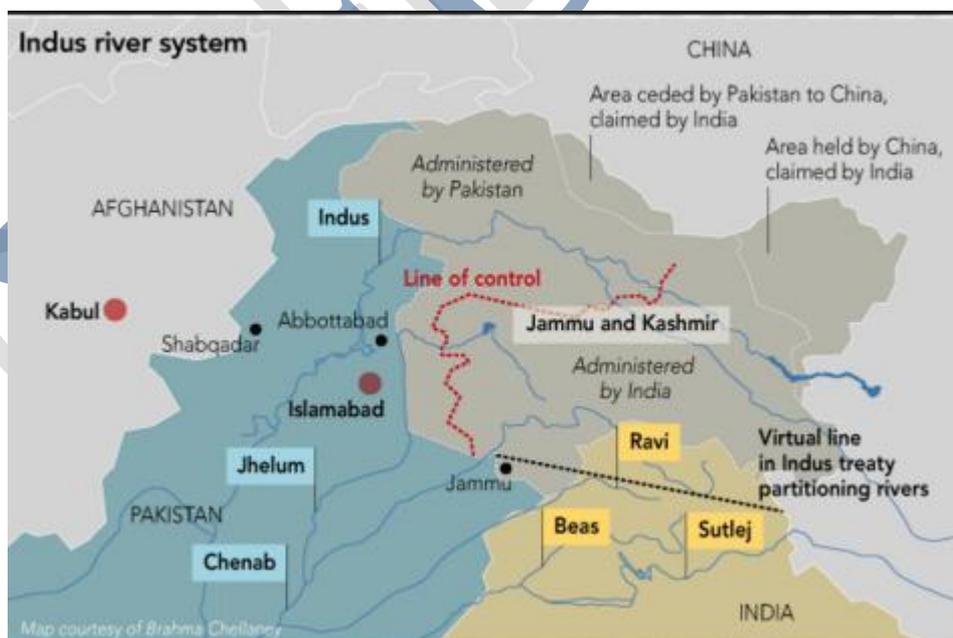
PCR will help capture all relevant information about a borrower, across different borrowing products in one place.

It can flag early warnings on asset quality by tracking performance on other credits.

Source: The Hindu.

Indus Water Treaty

(GS Prelims and Mains 2 – International Relations)



The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) is a **water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan** signed on September 19, 1960. The treaty was signed by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan.

It was brokered by the World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development). The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) deals with river Indus and its five tributaries, which are classified in 2 categories:

Eastern rivers: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi and **Western rivers:** Jhelum, Chenab, Indus

According to treaty, all the water of eastern rivers shall be available for unrestricted use in India. India should let unrestricted flow of water from western rivers to Pakistan. It doesn't mean that India can't use western river's water. The treaty says that India can use the water in western rivers in "non-consumptive" needs. Here non consumptive means we can use it for irrigation, storage and even for electricity production. (But India has not fully utilized this provision so far). The treaty allocates 80% of water from the six-river Indus water system to Pakistan.

A Permanent Indus Commission was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. Though Indus originates from Tibet, China has been kept out of the Treaty.

Note: India has never used our rights on the western rivers. Under the Indus Water Treaty, we can make use of the waters of the western rivers for irrigation, storage, and even for producing electricity, in the manner specified.

Source: The Hindu.

'Krishna Kutir'

(GS Prelims and Mains 1, 2 – Women Issues)

The Supreme Court had last year taken cognisance of the plight of widows living in Vrindavan and ordered the centre and the Uttar Pradesh government to take "all steps to rehabilitate the widows of Vrindavan so as to bring them to a stage where they can live with dignity".

Developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development under the 'Swadhar Greh' scheme on 1.4 hectares of land, 'Krishna Kutir' is equipped with a large modern kitchen and a skill-cum-training centre to teach the widows stitching, embroidery, among other things. According to a WCD official, the building's construction has been funded by the centre and will be managed by the state government.

The facility has 100 room and 200 bathrooms, and equipped with amenities like ramps and elevators for senior citizens and differently abled persons.

Swadhar Greh Scheme

The Swadhar scheme was *launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002 for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. The scheme provides shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls who are in need.*

The beneficiaries include widows deserted by their families and relatives, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters, women victims of terrorist/extremist violence etc.

Source: The Hindu.

East Asia Summit

(GS Prelims and Mains 2 – International Relations)

6th East Asia Summit and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting held in Singapore

Commerce & Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu attended the 6th East Asia Summit-Economic Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM) and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM) in Singapore today. Singapore is currently holding the Chair of ASEAN.

The 6th East-Asia Economic Ministers' Meeting was chaired by Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore, and was attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries and their eight dialogue partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The Ministers welcomed the higher global economic growth forecast for 2018 and took note of the increasing importance of trade and investment relations among the EAS economies. Acknowledging the potential for disruptions in the macro-economy that could affect overall market sentiments and global growth, the EAS-EMM forum expressed the hope that the economic linkages among the EAS members will enable them to address these challenges.

The Ministers agreed to the importance of keeping markets open and fair as well as improving transparency and predictability of the business environment. The meeting recognized the importance of ongoing work to maximize the opportunities of, and address the challenges presented by, the digital economy and the rise of regional and global value chains, as part of their efforts to promote economic growth and integration in the region.

East Asia Summit

The East Asia Summit is a unique Leaders-led forum of 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region formed to further the objectives of regional peace, security and prosperity. It has evolved as a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture.

Established in 2005, EAS allows the principal players in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss issues of common interest and concern, in an open and transparent manner, at the highest level. The membership of EAS consists of ten ASEAN Member States (i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam), Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the USA. EAS is an initiative of ASEAN and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.

The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad. The final report of the East Asian Study Group in 2002, established by the ASEAN+3 countries (i.e. China, Japan and ROK), recommended EAS as an ASEAN led development limited to the ASEAN +3 countries. However, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) held in Vientiane on July 26, 2005 welcomed the participation of ASEAN, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, India and New Zealand, in the first EAS. USA and the Russian Federation were formally included as members of the EAS at the 6th EAS held in Bali, Indonesia on 19 November 2011.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

EDITORIAL

To Read

Risks remain: on GDP growth

The spurt in economic growth is news, but the Centre must watch the fiscal deficit

The Indian economy grew at an impressive rate of 8.2% in the April-June quarter this year, its fastest pace in nine quarters, according to official GDP data released on Friday. The first quarter growth spurt was propped by strong performance in the manufacturing sector, which grew at 13.5%, after shrinking 1.8% in the first quarter last year, thanks to de-stocking by firms in the lead-up to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax. The construction and agriculture sectors that grew just 1.8% and 3%, respectively, in Q1 in 2017-18, clocked growth rates of 8.7% and 5.3% in Q1 of 2018-19. While high frequency data points like auto sales and industrial output are in sync with these numbers, it must be remembered that this 8%-plus growth print can be attributed to the resolution of several GST transition problems, budgetary support to the rural economy and, in no small measure, the effect of a lower base last year. The economy had grown just 5.6% in Q1 of 2017-18, owing to the lingering effects of demonetisation and the impending implementation of GST from July 1, 2017. Government spending made a significant contribution to overall economic growth, witnessing a sizeable increase of about 10% compared to last year, helping boost gross fixed capital formation. The latest data marks a steady upward march in the economy over the past four quarters.

The 8.2% figure couldn't have come at a better time for the Modi government. But some of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's points to discredit the quality of growth under the UPA — for instance, that it compromised on the fiscal and current account deficits and led to spiralling inflation — are emerging as key risks for the economy again. Just over 86% of the budgeted fiscal deficit target for the current financial year has been reached within the first quarter; GST collections, after a slew of rate cuts to spur consumption, have dipped to about ₹94,000 crore in August. The falling rupee, oil price trends and the expanding current account deficit are equally worrying, as is the Reserve Bank of India's expectation of a rise in inflation in the latter half of this year. Also, growth in the services sector has decelerated from last year's levels. The 'normalcy' of this monsoon is marred by wide regional variations. In such a scenario, the RBI, which has already raised interest rates twice in the last three months, is unlikely to adopt an easy money policy that is congenial to growth. India remains the world's fastest growing large economy. But it

needs to grow even faster to spur job creation. The focus must be on sorting out vital economic indicators that are far from perfect. Sustaining an 8%-plus growth rate needs more pro-active policy-making and a continuous pursuit of well-crafted reforms.

MAINS QUESTION

Q: Nuclear weapons offer us nothing but a balance of terror, and a balance of terror is still terror. Discuss.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

1. Choose the right statement related to Kasturirangan committee on the Western Ghats

- a. A complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA.
- b. It classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 and 3.
- c. Both a and B.
- d. None.

Answer: A

Explanation: Madhav Gadgil Committee recommended Western Ghats boundary in to ESZ 1, 2 and 3 not Kasturirangan committee.

2. Which of the following river flows over Western Ghats?

- a. Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery.
- b. Cauvery, Mandovi and Narmadha.
- c. Tapi, Mahi, Cauvery.
- d. All the above.

Answer: A

Explanation: The Western Ghats is an extensive region spanning over six States, 44 districts and 142 taluks. It is the home of many endangered plants and animals. Western Ghats host India's richest wilderness in 13 national parks and several sanctuaries. Recognised by UNESCO as one of the world's eight most important biodiversity hotspots, these forested hills are also sourcing to numerous rivers, including the Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery.

3. Choose the wrong statement related to Swadhar Greh Scheme

- a. It was launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002.
- b. 'Krishna Kutir' is equipped with a large modern kitchen and a skill-cum-training centre is under this scheme.
- c. Both a and b.
- d. None.

Answer: D

Explanation: The Swadhar scheme was launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002 for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. The scheme provides shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls who are in need.

4. *The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) deals with river Indus and how many tributaries*
- Three.
 - Four.
 - Five.
 - Six.

Answer: C

Explanation: The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) deals with river Indus and its five tributaries, which are classified in 2 categories:

Eastern rivers: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi and **Western rivers:** Jhelum, Chenab, Indus

5. *ASEAN+3 countries are*
- India, China, Australia.
 - Japan, South Korea, China.
 - India, USA, Russia.
 - Japan, India, Australia.

Answer: B

Explanation: The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad. The final report of the East Asian Study Group in 2002, established by the ASEAN+3 countries (i.e. China, Japan and ROK)