



## World Environment Day

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### Why in News

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The **World Environment Day** is observed on the **5<sup>th</sup> of June every year** for encouraging worldwide awareness and action to protect our environment.

- The day has been celebrated **since 1974** by **engaging governments, businesses, celebrities and citizens** to focus their efforts on a pressing environmental issue.
- **India** will be **focusing on the Nagar Van (Urban Forests)** in addition to the official theme of the World Environment Day.
- Further, the **Indian Navy** has also marked the day through various initiatives which are intended to **reduce its environmental footprint**.

### Key Points

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- **Description:**
  - The **theme** of World Environment Day 2020 is '**Celebrating Biodiversity**'— **a concern that is both urgent and existential**.
  - Almost **one million species are facing extinction** worldwide and thus there has never been a more important time to focus on **biodiversity**.
  - The day will be **hosted in Colombia in partnership with Germany**.

- **Initiatives by Indian Navy:**
  - Released ‘**Indian Navy Environment Conservation Roadmap**’ (INECR) which is a guiding document and key enabler for progressively achieving a **green footprint**.
  - It has voluntarily implemented all six schedules of the **International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) regulations**.
    - It covers **pollution of the marine environment** by ships from operational or accidental causes.
    - It lists various forms of marine pollution caused by oil, noxious liquid substances, harmful substances in packaged form, sewage and garbage from ships, etc.
  - Currently, it has been focussing on the **reduction of overall power consumption** through a progressive induction of energy efficient equipment.

## Urban Forests

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- **Description:**

An urban forest is a forest, or a collection of trees, that grow within a city, town or a suburb. In a wider sense, it may include any kind of woody plant vegetation growing in and around human settlements.
- **Significance:**
  - Biodiversity conservation has traditionally been considered confined to remote forest areas but with **increasing urbanization, a need has arisen to safeguard and save biodiversity in urban areas** also.
  - It concentrates on all tree-dominated as well as other green resources in and around urban areas, such as woodlands, public and private urban parks and gardens, street trees and square plantations, botanical gardens and cemeteries.
- **Benefits:**
  - It is expected to **create microclimate and reduce the urban heat island effect**.

An **urban heat island** is an urban area or metropolitan area that is significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas due to human activities.
  - The urban forests play key roles in supporting water management in urban areas through management of the **urban hydrological cycle**.
  - Urban forests can **sequester huge amounts of carbon** by capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Lack of appropriate tree planting spaces** due to increased urbanisation.
  - **Invasive non-native plant species** threatening urban forest ecosystems.
  - Lack of awareness among people.

- **Solutions:**

- Novel and innovative methods like that of the Japanese **“Miyawaki” method** of afforestation can be used to grow urban forests and expand the green cover in these areas.

Miyawaki is a technique pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, that helps **build dense, native forests in a short time.**

- The increased **awareness about the urban forestry and management** of the same would help to increase the urban forest cover with increasing urbanisation.

## Biodiversity

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- **Importance of Biodiversity:**

- The theme for the **International Biodiversity Day for 2020** was **“Our solutions are in nature”**.

The theme highlights that **Biodiversity remains the answer to a number of sustainable development challenges.**

- Biodiversity is the variety and variability of life on Earth. Biodiversity is typically a measure of **variation at the genetic, species, and ecosystem level.**
- Human health ultimately depends upon **ecosystem products and services** (such as availability of freshwater, food and fuel sources) which are requisite for good human health and productive livelihoods.
- Biodiversity loss can have significant **direct human health impacts** if ecosystem services are no longer adequate to meet social needs.
- Indirectly, **changes in ecosystem services affect** livelihoods, income, local migration and, on occasion, may even cause political conflict.

- **Biodiversity in India:**

- India has nearly **8% of the global biodiversity.**
- The country is endowed with rich biodiversity having several species of animals and plants and hosts **4 of the 35 global biodiversity hotspots** which include:

- **Himalaya:** Includes the entire Indian Himalayan region (and that falling in Pakistan, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar)
- **Indo-Burma:** Includes entire North-eastern India, except Assam and Andaman group of Islands (and Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and southern China)
- **Sundalands:** Includes Nicobar group of Islands (and Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Philippines)
- **Western Ghats and Sri Lanka:** Includes entire Western Ghats (and Sri Lanka)

## Way Forward

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- According to ‘**State of India’ Environment 2020** report, for the **first time in the decade (2010-20)** the **top five** global economic risks **in terms of likelihood are all environmental** including **extreme weather, climate action failure, natural disaster and biodiversity loss**.
- Even the theme of World Environment Day recognises that human beings **cannot survive in isolation as biodiversity is important for the survival** of everyone.
- Thus, **intact and preserved structures of the environmental ecosystem** is the only way to maintain the resilience of nature. Otherwise, the codependent web of life will be threatened if its components are eroded one by one.

**Source: PIB**