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UNESCO Global Geoparks

Why in News

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 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., **Venkatraipur** 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.

Source: TH

Step Up for TB 2020 Report

Why in News

The “**Step Up for TB 2020**” report by the **Stop TB Partnership** and **Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF)** has highlighted India’s **conservative approach** regarding the new medicines for **Drug Resistant TB**, putting lives of patients including children in danger.

The current **Pandemic** has further aggravated the sufferings of TB patients in the country in terms of disease **diagnosis, surveillance and treatment.**

Note

- Founded in 1971, **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)**, sometimes rendered in English as **Doctors Without Borders**, is an **international humanitarian medical non-governmental organisation (NGO)** of **French origin** best known for its projects in **conflict zones** and in countries affected by endemic diseases.
- **It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.**

Tuberculosis (TB)

- **Tuberculosis** is caused by bacteria (**Mycobacterium tuberculosis**) that most often affect the **lungs**.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- **Symptoms:** Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:** TB is treatable and curable disease. It is treated with a standard 6 month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.
- **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.

- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.
- Tuberculosis (TB) remains the **world's deadliest infectious disease**, killing more than **1.4 million people in 2019**, despite being curable.

Key Points

- **About the Report:**

- The report presents data on **37 high-burden countries, including India** (representing 77% of the global estimated TB incident cases), assessing the extent to which **national policies align with international best practices** based on **World Health Organisation (WHO)** guidelines and the latest scientific research.
- This is the **4th edition** of this report, which focuses on countries' policies and practices related to **4 key areas of national TB programmes (NTPs)**:
 - Diagnosis,
 - Treatment (including models of care),
 - Prevention, and
 - Medicines procurement policies.

- **Findings:**

- There are barriers to policy adoption and implementation across the surveyed countries.
- The **critical medical innovations** are reaching very few people who urgently need them.
- The report emphasised that **oral treatment regimens** for people with drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) must be prioritised over older, toxic drugs that have to be injected and cause serious side effects.
- Nearly **1 in 3 people** with TB disease is **still not diagnosed and notified**.
- Almost **2 in 3 countries** surveyed still do not include in their policies urinary **TB lipoarabinomannan (TB LAM) testing** for people living with HIV. TB LAM is the only rapid point-of-care TB test available, and there is more than enough evidence of its benefits as a lifesaving point-of-care test.

- **India Specific Findings:**
 - India was criticised for not scaling up the new Disease Resistant (DR)-TB drugs **Bedaquiline and Delamanid**, needed even more during **Covid-19**.
Pretomanid is the third new drug developed for the treatment.
 - Until March 2020, less **than 10% of India's MDR-TB patients** who were eligible for Bedaquiline had received it. This is alarming, since **India is home to a quarter of the world's DR-TB patients**.
India has the highest TB burden in the world. In 2018, **2.15 million TB cases were reported**, which is 16% more than in 2017.
- **India's Initiative to Fight TB:**
 - **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme:**
To align with the ambitious goal, the programme has been renamed from the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) to National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).
 - **Eliminating TB by 2025:** India is committed to **eliminating tuberculosis from the country by 2025**, five years ahead of the global target by the **World Health Organisation (WHO) i.e. 2030**.
 - **The Nikshay Ecosystem:**
It is the National TB information system which is a one-stop solution to manage information of patients and monitor program activity and performance throughout the country.
 - **Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY):**
This scheme is aimed at providing financial support to TB patients for their nutrition.
 - **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign:**
Launched In September 2019 it is showcasing the highest level of commitment for the elimination of TB.
 - **The Saksham Project:**
It is a project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) that has been providing psycho-social counselling to DR-TB patients.
 - The Government of India has partnered with the **Global Fund** to launch **JEET (Joint Effort for Elimination of TB)**, a private sector engagement program operating across the country.

- **Global Efforts:**
 - The **World Health Organization** (WHO) has launched a joint initiative “**Find. Treat. All. #EndTB**” with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership. The WHO End TB Strategy outlines global impact targets to **reduce TB deaths by 90%, to cut new cases by 80%** between the years **2015 and 2030**, and to ensure that no family is burdened with catastrophic costs due to TB.
 - It aims to accelerate the TB response and ensure access to care, in line with WHO’s overall drive towards **Universal Health Coverage**.
- WHO also releases the **Global Tuberculosis Report**.

Way Forward

- Despite the **notable successes** achieved by the different programmes, robust efforts are needed to improve the early and **accurate diagnosis** followed by a prompt appropriate treatment which is vital for ending TB.
- India must collaborate with global efforts which are being done to eliminate the TB along with the **paradigm shift in the control measure**.

Source:IE

Supreme Court on Curbing Fake News

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court** has asked the Centre to provide **information on the existing legal mechanisms to deal with complaints about the content on television channels**.

Further it has asked the Centre to create an authority to check **fake news** and bigotry on air.

Key Points

- **Background:**

- The court was hearing a **Public Interest Litigation** (PIL) filed by various organisations who objected to the reporting by certain television news channels and news portals on the **Tablighi Jamaat event** held in **March 2020**.

The religious gathering **emerged as one of the early hot spots of Covid-19** in the national capital.

- The **petitions sought a direction from the court to stop the dissemination of fake news and to identify and take strict action** against sections of the media that **communalised** the incident.
- In **October 2020**, the bench asked the Centre to file a response on steps taken to ensure fake news is not circulated through online and electronic media platforms.
- The government, through the Ministry, **filed an affidavit in November and cited its advisories**, which maintained that **media coverage of the case predominantly struck a balanced and neutral perspective**.

It held that as a matter of journalistic policy, any section of the media may highlight different events, issues and happenings across the world as per their choice and it was for the viewer to choose from the varied opinions offered by the different media outlets.

- The court **rejected the affidavit as inadequate** and asked if the regulatory provisions of the **Cable TV Network (Regulation) Act of 1995**, meant for cable networks, would apply to TV broadcasts as well.

- **Fake News:**

- Fake news is **news, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive** readers.
- Usually, these stories are created **to either influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion** and can often be a profitable business for online publishers.
- Fake news **affects free speech and informed choices of the subjects** of the country, leading to the hijacking of democracy.
- **Controlling Mechanism:**
 - **Rebuttal:** It is a **form of fact-checking** wherein the fake news is debunked by pointing out errors like mismatch, malicious editing and misattribution.
 - **Public Education: Educating the end-users to be more discerning consumers** of news by informing them of verification tools so that they can ascertain the accuracy of a news item before sharing it.

- **Laws and Regulation to Curb Fake News in India:**

- There is **no specific law against fake news** in India. Free publication of news flows from **Article 19** of the Constitution guaranteeing **Freedom of Speech**.
- **Press Council of India:** It is a regulatory body which can warn, admonish or censure the **newspaper, the news agency, the editor or the journalist** or disapprove the conduct of the editor or the journalist if it finds that a newspaper or a news agency has violated journalistic ethics.
- **News Broadcasters Association:** It represents the private television news and current affairs broadcasters. The **self-regulatory body** probes complaints against electronic media.
- **Indian Broadcast Foundation:** It looks into the complaints against contents aired by channels.
- **Broadcasting Content Complaint Council:** It admits complaints against TV broadcasters for objectionable TV content and fake news.
- **Indian Penal Code: Section 153** (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot) and **Section 295** (injuring or defiling a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class) can be invoked to guard against fake news.
- **Information Technology Act 2000:** According to the **Section 66** of the act, if any person, dishonestly or fraudulently, does any act referred to in **Section 43** (damage to computer, computer system), shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees or with both.
- **Civil or Criminal Case for Defamation:** It is another resort against fake news for individuals and groups hurt by the fake news. **IPC Section 499** (defamation) and **Section 500** (whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both) provide for a defamation suit.

Way Forward

- Fake news has existed since the dawn of the printing press but in the age of the internet and social media, it has found a tremendous application. Manipulation of algorithms of social media and search engines is a global trend now.
- Misinformation and disinformation spread in the media is becoming a serious social challenge. It is leading to the poisonous atmosphere on the web and causing riots and lynchings on the road.
- Countering content manipulation and fake news to restore faith in social media without undermining internet and media freedom will require public education, strengthening of regulations and effort of tech companies to make suitable algorithms for news curation.

- Any future legislation should take the whole picture into account and not blame the media and go for knee-jerk reactions; in this age of new media anyone can create and circulate new for undisclosed benefits.

Source: TH

12th BRICS Summit

Why in News

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.

Source:TH

C.B.I and Consent of States

Why in News

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 **connivance** 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.

Source:TH

Open Acreage Licensing Policy

Why in News

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.

Source: PIB

India's First Green Energy Convergence Project: Goa

Why in News

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.

Source:PIB

Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project

Why in News

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.

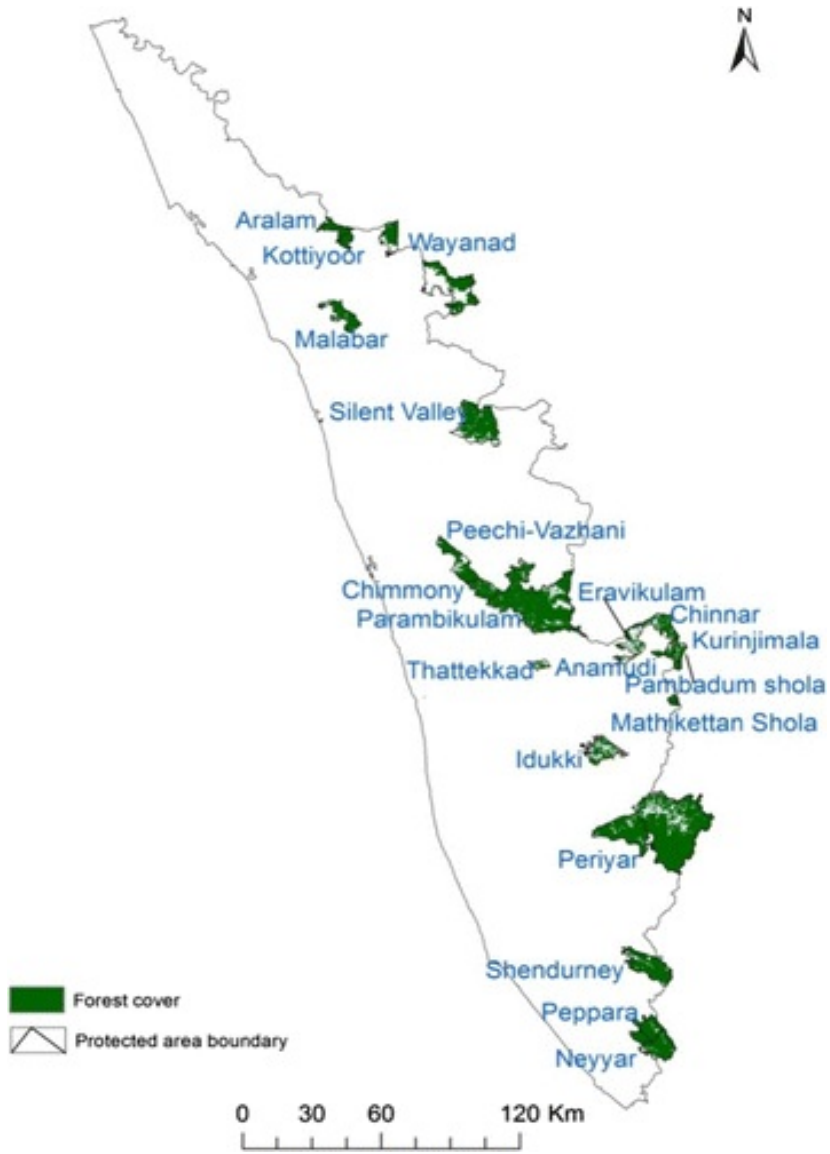
- **Concerns:**
 - **Environmental Consequences:**
 - Around **20 hectares of forest land will have to be cleared** out and **around 1900 large trees** and a larger number of small trees **will be cut.**
 - The area is **ecologically fragile**, as seen in the massive **landslide followed by minor landslides 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 **Chalakydy river in Thrissur district of Kerala.**
Chalakydy 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 Athirappilly 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.**



Source: TH