



Belgium Recognises Ecocide as a Crime

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

The Federal Parliament of [Belgium](#) has made history by becoming the **first country in the European Continent** to recognise '[ecocide](#)' **as a national as well as an international crime**.

- The law targets individuals in positions of decision-making power and corporations, aiming to prevent and punish severe environmental degradation such as extensive oil spills.

Note

- **Belgium is a federal and constitutional monarchy** divided into two main linguistic and cultural regions: **Flemish (Dutch)-speaking** Flanders and **French-speaking** Wallonia.
- Belgium is called the '**Cockpit of Europe**' because it is where the largest number of European battles have taken place in history.
- Its capital, Brussels, is also the seat of the European Union (EU).



What is Ecocide?

- Ecocide is defined as "**unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge** that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts."
 - The definition was provided by the **Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide**, formed by the Stop Ecocide Foundation.
- Ecocide is considered a form of **environmental crime** and is often associated with significant **negative impacts on biodiversity, ecosystems, and human well-being**.
 - Recognizing ecocide as a crime aims to hold individuals and corporations accountable for their actions and to prevent further environmental degradation.
- Ecocide is a crime in 12 countries, with nations mulling laws around criminalising environmental damage that is wilfully caused and harms humans, animals and plant species.

What is India's Stance on Criminalising Ecocide?

- **Ecocide as Law:** Some **Indian court judgments have referenced the term 'ecocide,' the concept has not been formally incorporated into Indian law.**
 - **Chandra CFS and Terminal Operators Pvt. Ltd. v. The Commissioner of Customs (2015):** The court noted that certain sections of people have been continuing ecocide by removing valuable timbers.

- **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India & Ors (1997):** [Supreme Court](#) called attention to an “anthropogenic bias” and argued that “environmental justice could be achieved only if we drift away from the principle of anthropocentric to **ecocentric.**”
- However, India has yet to take concrete steps towards enacting legislation specifically targeting ecocide.
- **Existing Legal Framework:** India's environmental legal framework includes statutes like the [Environmental \(Protection\) Act of 1986](#), [The Wild Life \(Protection\) Amendment Act, 2022](#), and the [Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 \(CAMPA\)](#).
 - Despite these laws, there remains a **gap in addressing ecocidal activities directly**, necessitating the incorporation of ecocide as a distinct criminal offence.

Read more: [Global Push to Criminalise Ecocide](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

The Environment Protection Act, 1986 empowers the Government of India to

1. state the requirement of public participation in the process of environmental protection, and the procedure and manner in which it is sought
2. lay down the standards for emission or discharge of environmental pollutants from various sources

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

Ans: (b)

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