



## 1. Biological Diversity Amendment Bill

Topic: Polity and Governance



**In News:** The Lok Sabha has passed the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

### More on the Topic

- The Bill aims to amend the Biological Diversity Act, of 2002.
- The amended Bill was drafted in response to complaints by traditional Indian medicine practitioners, the seed sector, industry and researchers that the Act imposed a **heavy “compliance burden”** and made it hard to conduct collaborative research and investments and simplify patent application processes.
- The text of the Bill also says that it proposes to **“widen the scope of levying access and benefit sharing with local communities and for further conservation of biological resources.”**

### Highlights from the Bill:

- The Bill sought to **exempt registered AYUSH medical practitioners and people accessing codified traditional knowledge**, among others, from **giving prior intimation to State biodiversity boards to access biological resources for certain purposes.**
- The Bill **decriminalises a range of offences under the Act** and substitutes them with monetary penalties. It empowers government officials to hold inquiries and determine penalties.
- The Bill **removes research and bio-survey activities from the purview of benefit-sharing requirements.**

### The Biological Diversity Act, 2002:

- The Biological Diversity Act, of 2002 was framed to give effect to **the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992**, which strives for sustainable, fair and

equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge.

- To do this, it formulates a three-tier structure consisting of a **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** at the national level, **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)** at the State level and **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)** at local body levels.
- The primary responsibility of the BMCs is to **document local biodiversity and associated knowledge** in the form of a **People's Biodiversity Register**.

Source: The Hindu

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## 2. National Commission for Women

Topic: Polity and Governance

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**In News:** The cases of molestation and rape of women in Manipur have brought them into focus.

**More on the Topic:**

- Established in 1992, as per **the National Commission for Women Act 1990**, the commission is expected to take up the concerns of women at the national level. Each state also has its commission.
- They are expected to consist of “persons of ability, integrity and standing who have had experience in law or legislation, trade unionism... committed to increasing the employment potential of women, administration, economic development, health, education or social welfare.”
- **The Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW)** was constituted in September 2006 as a statutory body as per the Manipur State Commission for Women Act, 2006.

**The Mandate:**

- The commissions are expected to **“investigate and examine all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution and other laws.”**
- They are also mandated to look into complaints and take **suo motu notice** of matters relating to “deprivation of women’s rights, non-implementation of laws enacted to protect women”.
- Facilitate **redressal of grievances** and advise the Government on all policy matters affecting women.

#### **Concerns with the National Commission for Women’s Functioning:**

- Too much **paperwork** and too few field visits.
- **Political appointments** in the commissions.
- Since they are **nominated by the political party in power**, most of the commissions are wary of even minor criticism of the government and they are sometimes over-enthusiastic in taking up states ruled by the Opposition.
- **The financial assistance** allocated to the Commissions is inadequate to meet their requirements.
- Their legislative power is lacking in substance, as evidenced by the mere **recommendatory nature of their reports.**

#### **Way Ahead:**

- **A social audit of the performance of different commissions** by competent external agencies regularly would give citizens an idea of their actual work.
- More connections to the ground realities must be ensured through field visits.
- Commissions need to be strengthened either by giving them Constitutional status or by amending their parent laws.

**Source: The Indian Express**

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### **3. Schedule Tribe (ST)**

**Topic: Social Justice**





**In News:** A Bill to amend the Constitution (Schedule Tribes) Order, 1950 and include specific communities in the list of Schedule Tribes of Chhattisgarh was passed by the Rajya Sabha.

**More on the Topic:**

- **The communities added to the ST include** Dhanuhar, Dhanuwar, Kisan, Saundra, Saonra, and Binjhia and three Devanagari versions of the Pando community.
- It is done by **Article 342 of the Constitution.**
- The President may concerning any State/UT and where it is a State after consultation with the Governor may notify the STs about that State/UT.
- The Parliament may by law include or exclude from the list of STs specified in a notification issued.

**Source: The Hindu**

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## 4. Silvopasture Systems

**Topic: Agriculture**



**In News:** The Silvopasture systems buffer against temperature and wind extremes, providing a favourable living environment for livestock.

**More on the Topic:**

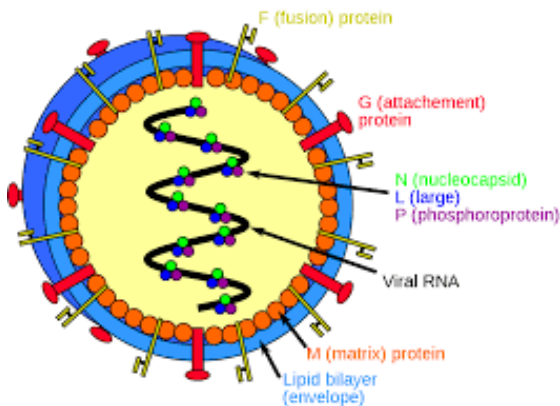
- Silvopasture is **an ancient and proven practice that harmoniously integrates trees, forage and livestock on the same land.**
- By combining these elements, silvopasture brings numerous environmental advantages, including **improved local climate resilience.**
- In light of the global deterioration of natural resources and forests, **silvopasture systems offer a relevant solution to deforestation trends.**

- The trees on silvopasture lands act as **natural carbon sinks**, sequestering significantly five-ten times more carbon than pastures without trees, all while maintaining or enhancing productivity.

Source: Indian Express

## 5. Nipah Virus

Topic: Science and Technology



**In News:** Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology (ICMR-NIV) has found evidence of the Nipah virus circulation in the bat population across nine states and one Union Territory.

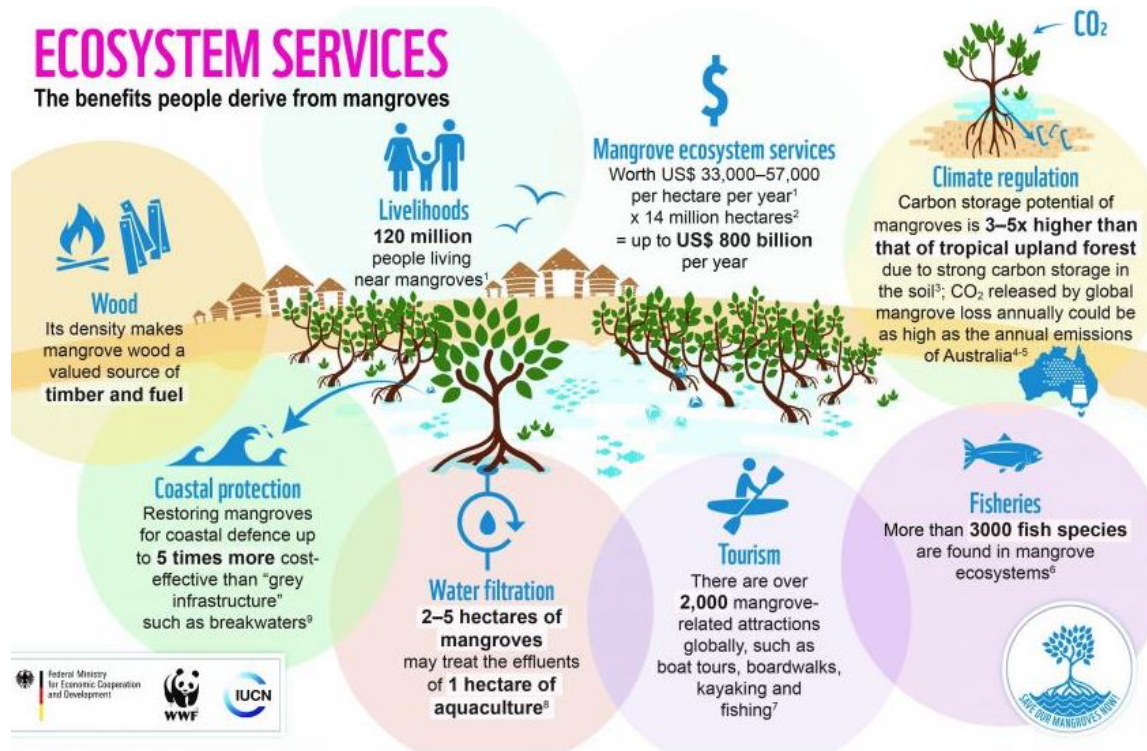
**More on the Topic:**

- The presence of Nipah viral antibodies has been found in bats in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya and the Union Territory of Pondicherry.
- The Nipah virus causes a **highly fatal respiratory and encephalitic infection in humans**.
- The **Pteropus species of fruit bats, commonly called flying foxes**, are the known carriers of the virus.
- Nipah Virus (NiV), a **zoonotic virus**, is a **type of RNA virus transmitted in humans through its natural hosts or direct contact with infected people or contaminated food**.
- One of the priority pathogens with a pandemic potential, case fatality is a big concern and Nipah's sudden emergence in 2018-19 in Kerala had warranted the need for constant surveillance.
- There is no treatment or vaccine available for either people or animals.

Source: The Indian Express

## 6. Mangrove Mitra Program

**Topic: Environment and Ecology**



**In News:** At least 25 families in Odisha’s coastal Kendrapara district have donated over 25 acres of their land near Bhitarkanika National Park (BNP) for a mangrove plantation.

### More on the Topic:

- The donations have been made under the Mangrove Mitra Programme and the park has 82 mangrove species.
- The Bhitarkanika mangrove ecosystem is **India’s second-largest**.
- It suffered a loss of forest cover from 1951–1961 due to the resettlement of refugees from Bangladesh.
- The influx led to mangrove deforestation as people reclaimed land for houses, agriculture, and aquaculture.

### About Mangroves:

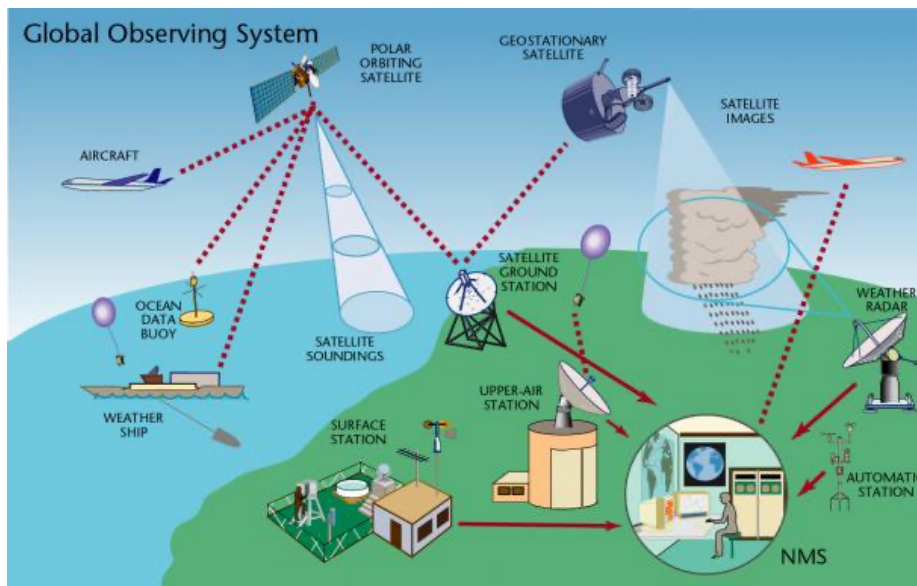
- Mangroves are a unique type of coastal ecosystem found in **tropical and subtropical regions, consisting of salt-tolerant trees, shrubs, and other plants**.
- These dense forests occur in **intertidal zones**, where the land is regularly flooded by seawater during high tide.

- Mangroves play a crucial role in **coastal protection**, providing a **buffer against storm surges and erosion**.
- They also serve as important habitats for a **diverse range of wildlife**, including **various fish species, birds, and invertebrates**.
- Moreover, mangroves are valuable in **sequestering carbon dioxide** and are considered vital in mitigating climate change.

Source: Hindustan Times

## 7. Atmosphere & Climate Research Modelling Observing Systems & Services

Topic: Science and Technology



**In News:** Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS) umbrella scheme is a central sector scheme, that pertains to the atmospheric science programs of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

**More on the Topic:**

- The sub-schemes under the ACROSS scheme are multi-disciplinary in nature and will be implemented in an integrated manner through 4 institutes.
- The four institutes are the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).
- They will cover all the aspects of the weather and climate.



**The sub-schemes – Each institute has a designated role for accomplishing the above tasks through the following schemes:**

- Upgradation of Forecast System
- Weather & Climate Services
- Atmospheric Observations Network
- Numerical Modelling of Weather and Climate
- Monsoon Mission III
- Monsoon Convection Clouds and Climate Change (MC4)
- High-Performance Computing System (HPCS)

**Source: PIB**

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