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International Big Cat Alliance

- To commemorate **50 years of Project Tiger**, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** for conservation of **seven big cats** namely **Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma** harbouring our planet.
- The alliance aims to reach out to **97 range countries** covering the natural habitats.
- IBCA would **further strengthen global cooperation and efforts to conserve the wild denizens**, especially the big cats.
- *His Excellency from **Cambodia**, was enthusiastic in getting tigers from India and rehabilitating them in their **Cardamom Hills and in their Sripok Wildlife Sanctuary.***



Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Tiger Reserves

- **IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)** provides a framework for assessing the management effectiveness of protected areas through **six elements** i.e. **context, planning, input, process, output and outcomes**.
- Fifth cycle of assessment covers 51 Tiger Reserves. Newly declared Tiger Reserves (**Ramgarh Visdhari and Ranipur**) have not been included.

Figure 3: Percentage of Tiger Reserves under different categories as observed during 5th cycle of MEE 2022

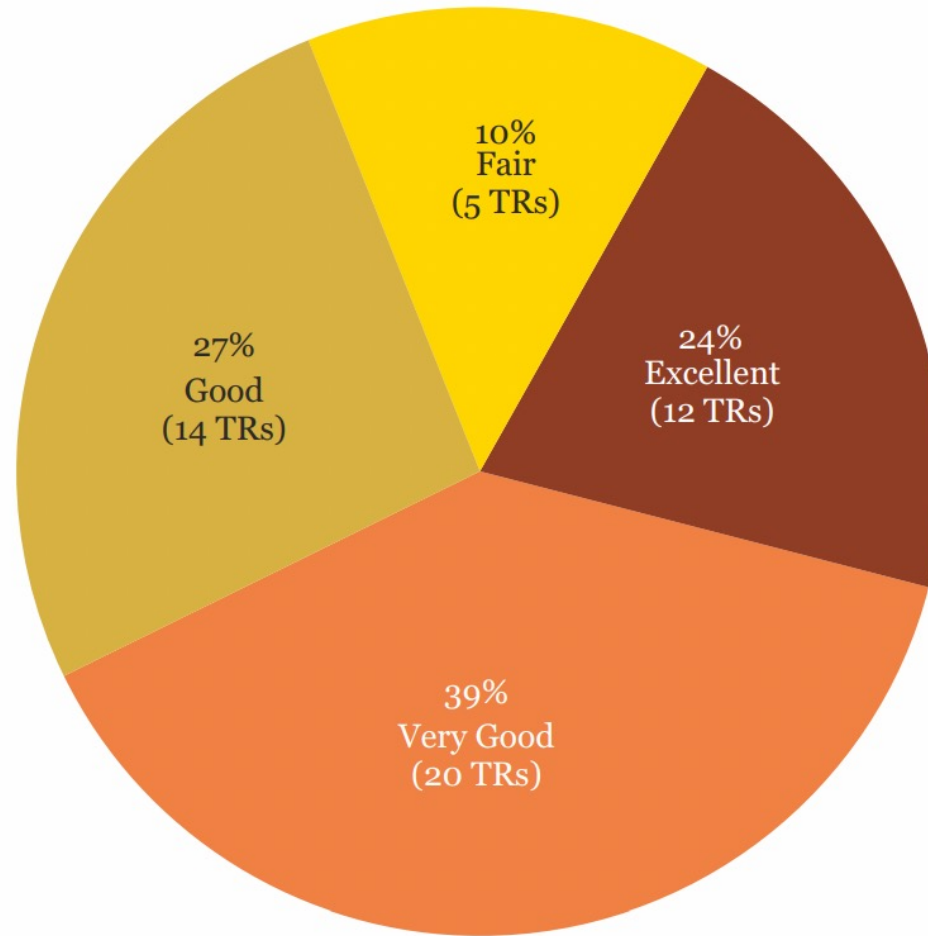


Table 4: Landscape clusters and MEE scores

Landscape	Name of Tiger Reserves	Number of Tiger Reserves	Mean MEE Score (%)	Ratings
Shivalik Gangetic Plain Landscape	Corbett, Rajaji, Dudhwa, Pilibhit, Valmiki	5	74.7	Very Good- 3; Good- 2
Central Indian and Eastern Ghats Landscape	Satpura, Kanha, Pench (MH), Similipal, Pench (MP), Tadoba-Andhari, Melghat, Navegaon-Nagzira, Bandhavgarh, Panna, NSTR, Amrabad, Sahyadri, Bor, Satkosia, Kawal, Ranthambhore, Sanjay -Dubri, Achanakmar, Palamau, Sariska, Mukundara Hills, Udanti-Sitanadi, Indravati	24	77.54	Excellent - 4 Very Good- 11; Good- 7; Fair- 2
Western Ghats	Kali, Parambikulam, Periyar, Anamalai, KMTR, Bhadra, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Mudumalai, Sathyamangalam, SMTR, BRT Hills	12	87.32	Excellent - 8 Very Good- 3; Good- 1
Northeastern Hills and Brahmaputra Landscape	Sundarbans, Manas, Buxa, Orang, Dampa, Kaziranga, Nameri, Pakke, Namdapha, Kamlang	9	68.43	Very Good- 2; Good- 4 Fair- 3
Sundarbans Landscape	Sundarban	1	75.76	Very Good-1
	51 TRs			

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Tiger Reserves

- **Periyar in Kerala** (MEE score 94.38%),
- **Satpura in Madhya Pradesh and Bandipur in Karnataka** (MEE score 93.18%), and
- **Nagarhole in Karnataka** (MEE score 92.42%) reported top three MEE score in 2022 cycle.

Table 5: Score and rating of Individual Tiger Reserves

Name of Tiger Reserve		MEE Score %	Category
1.	Periyar	94.38	Excellent (12 Tiger Reserves)
2.	Satpura	93.18	
3.	Bandipur	93.18	
4.	Nagarhole	92.42	
5.	Kanha	91.67	
6.	Biligiri Ranganatha Swamy Temple (BRT Hills)	91.67	
7.	Anamalai	91.67	
8.	Pench (MH)	90.91	
9.	Bhadra	90.91	
10.	Kali (Dandeli-Anshi)	90.30	
11.	Similipal	90.15	
12.	Mudumalai	90.15	



47.	Namdapha	57.58	Fair (5 Tiger Reserves)
48.	Udanti-Sitanadi	56.82	
49.	Nameri	56.82	
50.	Indravati	53.79	
51.	Dampa	50.00	

Rating key: 90% and above - Excellent, 75-89% - Very Good, 60-74% - Good and 50-59% - Fair

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Tiger Reserves

- The fifth cycle of assessment in 2022 has reported an **overall increase of 8% in mean MEE Score** (77.92%) in comparison to fourth cycle of MEE TR assessment 2018 (70%).
- **Twelve TRs** have secured the MEE score of 90% and above and have been included in "**Excellent**" category.
- There is **no Tiger Reserve** rated in the "**Poor**" category in the 5th cycle of MEE TR assessment.
- Tiger Reserves like **Panna and Sariska** that had lost all their tigers earlier, are now performing well.
- There were five Tiger Reserves - **Udanti-Sitanadi, Indravati, Palamau, Similipal and Nagarjunasagar - Srisailem**, which were categorised in the '**Red Corridor**' due to extremist issues, are now performing well.

All India Tiger Estimation 2022

- The tiger population in India **grew by 200** from 2018 to 2022, according to the fifth cycle of the **All India Tiger Estimation (2022)** released April 9, 2023.
- The number of tigers in India was **3,167 in 2022**, up from 2,967 in 2018, the report showed.
- The **growth, however, slowed to 6.7 per cent** in these four years from around **33 per cent** during 2014-2018, analysis of the latest data showed.



Table 2: Unique tiger individuals photo captured in each landscape

Landscape	Camera Trapped Tigers	
	2022	2018
Shivalik Hills & Gangetic Plains Landscape	804	646 (567-726)
Central Indian Highlands & Eastern Ghats Landscape	1,161	1,033 (885-1,193)
Western Ghats Landscape	824	981 (871-1,093)
North Eastern Hills & Brahmaputra Plains Landscape	194	219 (194-244)
Sunderbans Landscape	100	88 (86-90)
India	3,080*	2,967 (2,603-3,346)

**Ranipur (Uttar Pradesh) is added in Shivalik landscape for convenience. Three tigers were common between Ranipur & Madhya Pradesh (Central Indian landscape), hence 3 tigers were subtracted from the Total addition of all landscapes.*



9 Initial Tiger Reserves

- **Manas - Assam**
- **Palamau - Jharkhand**
- **Simlipal - Odisha**
- **Corbett - Uttarakhand**
- **Ranthambore - Rajasthan**
- **Kanha - Madhya Pradesh**
- **Melghat - Maharashtra**
- **Bandipur - Karnataka**
- **Sundarbans - West Bengal**



Bandipur TR

- It was established in 1973 under Project Tiger.
- In 1985, by including adjacent areas from Venugopala Wildlife Park, it was enlarged and named as **Bandipur National Park**.
- The park is located between the **Kabini river in the north and the Moyar river** in the south.
- The **Kabini Reservoir** separates the Bandipur and Nagarahole Tiger Reserve on the North-west.
- The **Nugu river** runs through the park.
- The **highest point** in the park is on a hill called Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta.
- Major concern in the Tiger Reserve is the **loss of bamboo and large extent invasion by Lantana**.

Mudumalai National Park

- Mudumalai National Park is a national park in the Nilgiri Mountains in **Tamil Nadu, south India**.
- The national park has been part of **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve since 1986** and was declared a tiger reserve together with a buffer zone of 367.59 km² (141.93 sq mi) in 2007.
- It is drained by the **Moyar River** and several tributaries.
- **Vayals** - seasonally water logged grasslands of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.
- **The Elephant whisperer's documentary** shot here.

Theppakadu Elephant camp

- Theppakadu Elephant camp is the **oldest elephant camp** in Asia.
- This elephant camp was established 100 years before.
- In this elephant camp elephants are mainly used in **Human- Wild animal conflicts, Forest Monsoon patrolling, eco-tourism, elephant conservation, Education, etc.**
- The Elephant camp is located on the bank of the **river Moyar.**

Madhav National Park

- Recently, a 4 year old male from **Satpura Tiger Reserve** and a three and half year old tigress from **Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserves**, into the specially created soft release enclosures in Madhav National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
- Madhav National Park, one of the oldest National Park of **Madhya Pradesh** notified in 1956, had sizeable tiger population in the past.
- Over the years, the national park had sporadic presence of tiger and the **last reported tiger presence was in 2012**.
- Spread over an area of 354.61 sq km, the location of the park assumes conservation significance as it has the potential **to connect Panna Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh with Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan**.



Cheetah Capital of World

- Dubbed the cheetah capital of the world, **Ojiwarongo in Namibia** is home to 1,400 wild cheetahs and the only cheetah genetics laboratory in Africa.
- It is run by the **Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF)** and it says it holds the world's largest wild cheetah database of biological material along with blood, tissue, semen and egg samples collected from over a thousand cheetahs.



POPULATION

20%

The global population of cheetahs living in Namibia

- The Government of India has prepared '**Lion@47: Vision for Amrutkal**' as a part of Project Lion for the conservation of Asiatic Lions in Gir, Gujarat.
- The **objective** of the document is to
 - 1) secure & restore lion habitats for managing its growing population,
 - 2) scale up livelihood generation and participation of local communities,
 - 3) become a global hub of knowledge on big cat disease diagnostics and treatment, and
 - 4) create inclusive biodiversity conservation through Project Lion initiative.

First Synchronized Survey of Vultures

- There are 246 vultures spread across **Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala**, according to the first-ever synchronised census on the bird carried out in February 2023.
- The survey was carried out in the **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR)** and the adjoining landscape consisting of **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR)** in Tamil Nadu, **Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS)** in Kerala, **Bandipur Tiger Reserve (BTR)** and **Nagerhole Tiger Reserve (NTR)** in Karnataka.
- A total of 98 vultures were seen in MTR, two in STR, 52 in WWS, 73 in BTR, and 23 in NTR.
- Volunteers sighted White-rumped vultures (183), Long-billed vultures (30), Red-headed vultures (28), Egyptian vultures (3), Himalayan Griffon (1), and Cinereous vultures (1).

Vulture Census

- The vulture census was conducted in 2022.
- The **last such census** was **carried out in 2015**.
- The census would be conducted by scientists at the Bombay Natural History Society (a conservation NGO), along with teams from the **13 states and the MoEFCC**.
- *Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.*



Drugs Toxic to Vulture

- **Diclofenac** has long been established as the prime reason for wiping out 99 percent of the vulture population in India in the 90s.
- Later two more veterinary drugs, **aceclofenac** and **ketoprofen**, were found to be toxic for vultures.
- As per the new study, **nimesulide** appears to act similar to diclofenac in exerting toxic effects on vultures.
- **Flunixin**
- **Carprofen**

Safe Drugs for Vultures

- Meloxicam
- Tolfenamic acid

Green Bond

- A Green Bond is a type of **debt security** created for funding or re-funding projects contributing **positively to the climate and/or ecosystem**.
- The only significant **difference** between Green Bonds and ordinary bonds is that the funds raised from investors are only used to support initiatives that have a **good influence on the environment**, such as green construction and renewable energy and these have a huge contribution to the planet and sustainability.
- **Since 2007**, a market for bonds specifically self-labelled or designated as 'green' has emerged.



Sovereign Green Bond

- A sovereign green bond is a debt instrument **issued by the central or state government** to borrow money from investors with the **commitment** that the mobilised fund **will be spent on climate or ecosystem-related activities.**
- Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs recently approved the **final Sovereign Green Bonds framework of India.**
- The framework **defines the 'green' sector** and the **process to ensure** that investments will be directed to it.

Excluded Projects

- Projects involving new or existing extraction, production and distribution of **fossil fuels**, including improvements and upgrades; or where the core energy source is fossil-fuel based
- Nuclear power generation
- Direct waste incineration
- Alcohol, weapons, tobacco, gaming, or palm oil industries
- Renewable energy projects generating energy from biomass using feedstock originating from protected areas
- Landfill projects
- Hydropower plants larger than 25 MW



Other Types of Bonds

- **Blue bonds** - Related to water management and marine sector
- **Yellow bonds** - Related to solar energy
- **Transition bonds** - If you consider **hard-to-abate industries** such as shipping and aviation, chemicals, steel, and cement, decarbonisation is a complex process, and transformation happens in a series of phases. Such **brown industries** require major investments to achieve any significant reduction in emissions.
- To add to this, traditional forms of sustainable finance usually do not classify investments in these business activities as “green.” And **this is where transition bonds come in.**

Other Types of Bonds

- Transition bond is a class of debt instruments that maintain the transparency and rigour that characterize green bonds but are designed to be **more inclusive in their standards**.
- Unlike green bonds that are earmarked to raise money for climate and environmental projects, transition bonds can be **issued by firms aspiring to reduce their GHG emissions**.
- In other words, these bonds **enable entities that would otherwise not qualify to issue green bonds to obtain sustainability-related financing**.

Rhino Bond

- The **World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD)** has issued the **Wildlife Conservation Bond (WCB)** to support of South Africa's efforts to conserve endangered species of **Black Rhino**.
- Wildlife Conservation Bond (WCB) is also known as "**Rhino Bond**".
- It is a **five-year \$150 million Sustainable Development Bond**.
- It includes a potential performance payment from the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)**.

African Rhinoceros (2 horns)

- **Black Rhino(Hook lipped)**

- Black rhinos are the smaller of the two African rhino species.
- Critically endangered.

- **White Rhino (Square lipped)**

- White rhinos are the second-largest land mammal after the elephant.
- Near Threatened.
 - Northern White Rhino - Critically Endangered
 - Southern White Rhino - Near Threatened
- As of March 2018, there are only two rhinos of the northern white rhino left, both of which are female.
- Researchers have created an embryo of the northern white rhino by using In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) process.

Amrit Dharohar scheme

- The features of **Amrit Dharohar scheme** encompass promoting the **unique conservation values** of wetlands including their optimal use for enhancing biodiversity, carbon stock, ecotourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
- The objectives inter-alia are **integrated management of such wetlands** for green growth, developing nature and culture-based tourism at the sites, community stewardship for wetland based livelihood, heritage, and culture, building convergence with different Ministries and departments, State Governments, Research and academic institutions and Industrial Sector, over the next three years across the country.

Mission Sahbhagita

- MOEFCC has launched **Mission Sahbhagita**, on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which is an important step towards **participatory conservation and wise use of wetlands** to enable a society ownership approach with communities leading at the forefront.

Wetlands of India Portal

- Wetlands of India Portal (indianwetlands.in), a **publicly available information and knowledge platform**, in order to facilitate knowledge sharing, information dissemination, host capacity building material, and provide a single-point access data repository with the features of Management Information System (MIS) login for each and every state/UT for uploading of information from time to time.

World Wetlands Day 2023

- World Wetlands Day, celebrated each year on **2 February**, marks the **date of the adoption** of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) on 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.
- The **theme** is “It’s Time for Wetlands Restoration”.
- India has **largest network of Ramsar Sites in Asia.**
-

MISHTI Scheme

- **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI)** envisage to comprehensively explore the possible area for **development of Mangroves** covering approximately 540 Sq. Kms. spreading across **11 States and 2 Union Territories** during five years commencing FY 2023-24 onwards.
- The sharing of **best practices** on plantation techniques, conservation measures, management practices and resources mobilization through Public Private Partnership are objectives of the MISHTI scheme.

National Clean Air Programme

- The government (MoEFCC) launched **National Clean Air Programme**, a **time-bound national level strategy** to tackle increasing air pollution.
- The NCAP will be a **mid-term, five-year action plan** with **2019 as the first year**.
- The main aim of the programme would be **40% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by 2026**.
- It is to be implemented in **131 non-attainment cities**.
- These cities are chosen on the basis of **Ambient Air Quality India (2011-2015)** and **WHO report 2014/2018**.
- The programme would take **2017 as the base year** for the comparison of concentration.



131 Non-attainment Cities

- It includes -
- 123 Non-Attainment Cities (NAC) which exceed the **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for 5 consecutive years** and
- 42 Million Plus Population Cities/Urban Agglomerations.
- 34 cities are common in both categories.

National Clean Air Programme

- **Airshed approach to deal with air pollution:**
- Under this, policymakers will plan actions keeping in view geographical, meteorological and other factors which pollute air within the airshed *instead of making policies guided by states' boundaries*.
- Currently, the airshed approach is being implemented for "Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas".
- The World Bank defines an airshed as a common geographic area where pollutants get trapped, creating similar air quality for everyone.
- The **PRANA** (Portal for Regulation of Air-Pollution in Non-Attainment Cities) portal will track the physical and financial status of city air action plan implementation for 132 cities.



Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan

- MOEFCC is going to launch Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan that **promotes the ranking of 131 cities in the country for implementing City Action Plans** prepared as part of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) for reducing air pollution up to 40% by 2025-26.
- 131 cities are categorized into **three groups based on population.**
 - 47 cities are in the first group having population more than 10 lakh.
 - 44 cities are in the second group having population between 3 to 10 lakh.
 - Third group consists of 40 cities having population less than 3 lakh.

Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan

- Cities are required to do the **self-assessment** as per the framework provided on PRANA online portal.
- This assessment is carried out **annually**.
- Cities have to **report implementation** of activities and measures taken in respect of solid waste management, road dust management, management of construction and demolition waste, control of vehicular emissions and industrial pollution.
- Based on the **self-assessment and third party assessment, 3 best-performing cities** in each group will be given cash award in the spirit of competitive federalism.
- It is **not based on the measurement of the air quality parameters** to rank the cities. It is **based on the actions taken** by the cities to improve the air quality in different domains.

Swachh Vayu Diwas

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change organized **3rd International Day of Clean Air for blue skies as Swachh Vayu Diwas** (“Swachh Vayu Neel Gagan”) to raise **awareness and facilitate actions** to improve air quality under National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).
- United Nations General Assembly has designated **7th September** as the “International Day of Clean Air for blue skies” with an aim to raise awareness and to promote actions to improve air quality.
- In 2022, it raises awareness on the urgency of strengthening national action and regional collaboration to improve air quality, with the global theme of “**The Air We Share**”.

Graded Response Action Plan

- A Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) **for control of air pollution in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR)** has been notified by the Ministry.
- It is based on a plan that was submitted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in November 2016.
- The GRAP was first notified in January 2017 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.



Graded Response Action Plan

- **Various stages:**
- Stage 1 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300).
- The second, third and fourth stages will be activated three days ahead of the AQI reaching the 'very poor' category (301 to 400), 'severe' category (401 to 450) and 'severe +' category (above 450)
- For this, the CAQM is relying on air quality and meteorological forecasts by the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM)** and the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.



Graded Response Action Plan

- **How is it different this year**
- **Implementing agency:** From 2021 onwards, the GRAP is being implemented by the
 - The orders and directions of the CAQM will prevail in case of any conflict between directions issued by the State governments and the CAQM.
 - Measures under the different categories of the plan are to be enforced by the pollution control boards of the NCR states and the concerned departments and agencies, including the traffic police, the Transport Department and road-owning and construction agencies.



Graded Response Action Plan

- Pre-emptive measures: In the version of the GRAP 2017, **measures kicked in after pollution concentrations reached a certain level.**
 - This year, measures are pre-emptive and will kick in based on forecasts in an attempt to prevent the AQI from deteriorating further.
- Wider pollutants range: The **older version of the GRAP was enforced based only on the concentration of PM2.5 and PM10.**
 - This year, GRAP is being enforced based on the AQI, which takes other pollutants also into accounts, such as ozone, sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen.



World Health Organisation Air Pollution Standards

- Since 1987, WHO has periodically issued **health-based air quality guidelines (AQG)** to assist governments and civil society to reduce human exposure to air pollution.
- The WHO air quality guidelines **were last published in 2006**: Air quality guidelines – global update 2005.
- Since then, there has been a marked increase in evidence of the adverse health effects of air pollution, built on advances in air pollution measurement and exposure assessment.
- The WHO Air quality guidelines recommend levels and interim targets for common air pollutants: **PM, O₃, NO₂, and SO₂**.

World Health Organisation Air Pollution Standards

Recommended 2021 AQG levels compared to 2005 air quality guidelines

Pollutant	Averaging Time	2005 AQGs	2021 AQGs
PM _{2.5} , µg/m ³	Annual	10	5
	24-hour ^a	25	15
PM ₁₀ , µg/m ³	Annual	20	15
	24-hour ^a	50	45
O ₃ , µg/m ³	Peak season ^b	-	60
	8-hour ^a	100	100
NO ₂ , µg/m ³	Annual	40	10
	24-hour ^a	-	25
SO ₂ , µg/m ³	24-hour ^a	20	40
CO, mg/m ³	24-hour ^a	-	4

µg = microgram

^a 99th percentile (i.e. 3–4 exceedance days per year).

^b Average of daily maximum 8-hour mean O₃ concentration in the six consecutive months with the highest six-month running- average O₃ concentration.

Note: Annual and peak season is long-term exposure, while 24 hour and 8 hour is short-term exposure.



Bharat Stage TREM IV

- It is for the manufacturers of **combine harvesters, power tillers and tractors with an engine capacity higher than 50 horsepower (HP)**.
- The Centre had earlier decided to make **Bharat Stage TREM IV emission regulations**, which are equivalent to Euro Stage IV norms, applicable from October 1, 2022.
- At present, **TREM III A emission norms** are applicable for tractors across various HP categories and were implemented in April 2010/2011.

Biomass Cofiring

- Biomass co-firing is the practise of substituting a part of the fuel with biomass at coal thermal plants.
- In boilers that were originally intended for the combustion of coal, biomass can be burned along with the coal.
- In order to accomplish this goal, the existing coal power plant will need to undergo **some retrofitting and partial reconstruction.**
- *The main difference between **briquettes and pellets** is their size. Briquettes usually weigh 1-2 kilos, while pellets are bullet-sized.*

Biomass Cofiring

- **Co-firing is an alternative** that can be used to convert biomass to electricity in an effective and environmentally friendly manner, as well as to limit the emissions of greenhouse gases produced by the power plant.
- Co-firing of biomass and coal is a strategy that is widely recognised as being both **cost-effective and efficient for reducing carbon emissions from coal fleets.**
- In India, biomass is typically burned in the field, which reflects apathy towards resolving the issue of clean coal by utilising a very easy solution that is readily available.
- There is a very simple method that can make clean coal more readily available.

Magnetite Pollution

- Magnetite pollution refers to the presence of a magnetic mineral called **Magnetite (Fe_3O_4)** in the environment, as a result of human activities such as **mining, steel production and industrial processes**.
- Anthropogenic magnetite nanoparticles have been identified to be present in the **human brain and circulatory system**, which are potentially linked with the incidence of **neurodegenerative and cardiovascular diseases**.
- Specifically, **magnetite nanoparticles originating from exhaust emissions and brake wear** are an important hazardous species in particulate matter.

Light Pollution

- Presence of **excessive, misdirected, or obtrusive artificial (usually outdoor) light.**
- Components of light pollution
 - Glare – excessive brightness that causes visual discomfort.
 - Skyglow – brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas.
 - Light trespass – light falling where it is not intended or needed.
 - Clutter – bright, confusing and excessive groupings of light sources.

Light Pollution

- In 2022, the district **administration of Ladakh in India created the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR)** which is the first International Dark Sky Reserve in India.
- The HDSR comprises six hamlets within the **Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- The reserve thus had a responsibility to keep the skies dark, particularly for the astronomical observatories located in the area.

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