

First biodiversity heritage site of Tamil Nadu

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Topic- Environment and Ecology [GS Paper-3]

Context- Recently the Tamil Nadu Government has issued a notification declaring Arittapatti in Melur block, Madurai district, a biodiversity heritage site.

Key Highlights

- The heritage site spans a total area of 193.21 hectares.
- Arittapatti village in Tamilnadu, rich in ecological and historical significance, houses around 250 species of birds including three important raptors birds of prey, namely the Laggar Falcon, the Shaheen Falcon and Bonelli's Eagle.
- The village is also home to wildlife such as the Indian Pangolin, Slender Loris and pythons.
- The area is surrounded by a chain of seven hillocks or inselbergs that serve as a watershed, charging '72 lakes, 200 natural springs and three check dams.'
- The Anaikondan tank, built during the reign of Pandiyan kings in the 16th century is one among them.
- Several megalithic structures, rock-cut temples, Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and Jain beds present in the area add to the historical significance of the region.

Conserving biodiversity

- To prevent the loss of biodiversity and to preserve the cultural and architectural heritage of bygone times, the State government of Tamilnadu, upon the recommendation of the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board has declared Arittapatti a biodiversity heritage site.
- The declaration of the site has been made under the Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

What is a Biodiversity Heritage Site?

- Under Section 37 of Biological Diversity Act, 2002 the State Government in consultation with local bodies may notify the regions of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites.
- The Biodiversity Heritage Sites are the well defined areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems – terrestrial, coastal and inland waters and, marine having rich biodiversity comprising of any one or more components such as
 - Richness of wild as well as domesticated species or intra-specific categories
 - High endemism
 - Prevalence of rare and threatened species
 - Keystone species
 - Species of evolutionary importance
 - Wild ancestors of domestic or cultivated species or their varieties
 - Past preeminence of biological components represented by fossil beds
 - Significant cultural, ethical or aesthetic values; important for the maintenance of cultural diversity (with or without a long history of human association with them)
- Areas having any of the above characteristics may qualify for inclusion as BHS.

Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) in India

- Nallur Tamarind Grove- Bangalore, Karnataka
- Hogrekan- Chikmagalur, Karnataka
- University of Agricultural Sciences- Bengaluru, Karnataka
- Ambaraguda- Karnataka
- Glory of Allapalli- Maharashtra
- Tonglu BHS and Dhotrey BHS under the Darjeeling Forest Division- Darjeeling, West Bengal
- Mandasaru- Odisha
- Dialong Village- Manipur
- Ameenpur lake- Telangana
- Majuli- Assam
- Gharial Rehabilitation Centre- Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
- Chilkigarh Kanak Durga- West Bengal
- Purvatali Rai- Goa
- Naro Hills- Madhya Pradesh
- Asramam- Kerala

Biodiversity Act, 2002

- The Biodiversity Act, 2002 was enacted by the Parliament of India for conservation of biological diversity.
- The Act is implemented to fulfil the obligations under the Convention on Biodiversity.
- Under the Biodiversity Act, the National Biodiversity Authority and the State Biodiversity Boards have been established.

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA):

- The NBA is a statutory autonomous body.
- It is headquartered in Chennai.
- It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.
- State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) have been created in all states with 31,574 biological management committees across India.