

23– 08 – 2024

News: Biosphere Reserves

- Recently, **UNESCO** has approved the designation of 11 new Biosphere Reserves (BR) in 11 countries.

List of New Biosphere Reserves (BR)

- Kempen-Broek Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Belgium, Kingdom of the Netherlands)
- Darién Norte Chocoano Biosphere Reserve (Colombia)
- Madre de las Aguas Biosphere Reserve (Dominican Republic)
- Niimi Biosphere Reserve (Gambia)
- Colli Euganei Biosphere Reserve (Italy)
- Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Italy, Slovenia)
- Khar Us Lake Biosphere Reserve (Mongolia)
- Apayaos Biosphere Reserve (Philippines)
- Changnyeong Biosphere Reserve (Republic of Korea)
- Val d'Aran Biosphere Reserve (Spain)
- Irati Biosphere Reserve (Spain)

UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves

- Biosphere Reserve is an international designation by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over a large area of terrestrial or coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination of both.
- Biosphere Reserves tries to balance economic and social development and maintenance of associated cultural values along with the preservation of nature.
- These are special environments for both people and nature and are living examples of how human beings and nature can co-exist while respecting each other's needs.
- The UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) covers internationally designated protected areas, each known as biosphere reserves, that are meant to demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature (e.g. encourage sustainable development).
- There are 12 biosphere reserves in India connected with UNESCO networks of Biosphere Reserves and are 6 out of UNESCO networking.

Criteria for Designation of BR

- A site must contain a protected and minimally disturbed core area of value of nature conservation.

- The core area must be a bio-geographical unit and should be large enough to sustain a viable population representing all trophic levels.
- The involvement of local communities and use of their knowledge in biodiversity preservation.
- Area's potential for preservation of traditional tribal or rural modes of living for harmonious use of the environment.
- **Conservation:** Managing Biosphere Reserve's genetic resources, endemic species, ecosystems, and landscapes.
- Along with the wildlife, culture and customs of tribals are also protected.
- **Development:** Promoting economic and human growth that is sustainable on a sociocultural and ecological level.
- It seeks to strengthen the 3 pillars of sustainable development which are social, economic and protection of the environment.

International Status of Biosphere Reserve

- UNESCO has introduced the designation 'Biosphere Reserve' for natural areas to minimise conflict between development and conservation.
- Biosphere Reserves are nominated by the national government which meets a minimal set of criteria under the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve Program of UNESCO.

- Total number of World Network of Biosphere Reserves is 759 located in 136 countries and covers a total of 7,442,000 square kilometers.
- There are about 275 million people living in biosphere reserves worldwide.
- There are a total 12 BR of India recognized internationally under MAB Reserve Programme.

Functions of BR

Logistic support

- Promoting research activities, environmental education, training and monitoring in the context of local, national and international conservation and sustainable development.

Biosphere Reserves in India that are connected with UNESCO

- Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve- Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Gulf of Mannar – Tamil Nadu, Sunderbans – West Bengal, Nanda Devi – Uttarakhand, Nokrek – Meghalaya, Pachmarhi –Madhya Pradesh, Simlipal – Odisha, Great Nicobar – Andaman & Nicobar, Achanakmar–Amarkantak- Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Agasthyamalai – Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Khangchendzonga – Sikkim and Panna – Madhya Pradesh.

Biosphere reserves not connected with UNESCO

- **Manas** – Assam, **Dihang-Dibang** – Assam, **Great Rann of Kutch** – Gujarat, **Cold Desert** – Himachal Pradesh, **Dibru – Saikhowa** – Assam and **Seshachalam** – Andhra Pradesh.

Biosphere Reserve project

- The **Government of India** started the Biosphere Reserve scheme in 1986.
- This is **guided by the UNESCO MAB programme**, as India is a signatory to the **landscape approach supported by MAB**.
- Under this scheme, **financial assistance is provided in a 90:10 ratio to the North Eastern Region States and 3 Himalayan states, and in a 60:40 ratio to other states for the maintenance, improvement, and development of certain items within the biosphere reserves**.
- The **State Government** prepares the **Management Action Plan** for the biosphere reserves, which is then approved and monitored by the **Central MAB Committee**.
- This scheme is **implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.

Zones of Biosphere Reserve

Core

- Core is the most protected area of a biosphere reserve. It may contain endemic plants and animals.
- They conserve the wild relatives of economic species and also represent important genetic reservoirs having exceptional scientific interest.
- A core zone is a protected region, like a National Park or Sanctuary / protected / regulated mostly under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- It is kept free from human interference.

Buffer Zone

- Buffer Zone surrounds the core zone, and its activities are managed such that it help in the protection of the core zone in its natural condition.
- It includes restoration, limited tourism, fishing, grazing, etc., which are permitted to reduce its effect on the core zone.
- Research and educational activities are to be encouraged.

Transition Zone

- Transition Zone is the outermost part of the BR. It is the zone of cooperation where human ventures and conservation are done in harmony.

- It includes settlements, croplands, managed forests and areas for intensive recreation and other economic uses characteristics of the region.

Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB)

- “Man and Biosphere” Programme (MAB) was initiated by UNESCO in 1971.
- It is an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.
- MAB integrates natural and social sciences, economics, and education to enhance human well-being, ensure fair distribution of benefits, and preserve natural and managed ecosystems.
- This promotes creative and culturally suitable approaches to economic development that are environmentally sustainable.

News: Classical Language Status

- Recently, the Central government has decided to modify the criteria for granting classical language status, following recommendations from the Linguistics Expert Committee of the Union Culture Ministry.

Classical Language Status

- In 2004, the Government of India decided to create a new category of languages called “classical languages”.
- In 2006, it laid down the criteria for conferring classical language status. So far, the 6 languages are granted classical language status.
- Tamil became the first language to receive Classical language status in 2004, followed by Sanskrit (2005), Telugu, Kannada (both in 2008), Malayalam (2013) and Odia (2014).

Criteria

- High antiquity of early texts/recorded history spanning 1,500–2,000 years.
- Possession of a body of ancient literature/texts considered valuable heritage by generations.
- Presence of an original literary tradition not borrowed from another speech community.

- The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there can also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

Benefits

- Once a language is declared classical, it gets financial assistance for setting up a centre of excellence for the study of that language and also opens up an avenue for two major awards for scholars of eminence.
- Additionally, the University Grants Commission can be requested to establish professional chairs for scholars of classical languages, starting with central universities.

Recent Developments

- The Central government has decided to modify the criteria for granting classical language status, following recommendations from the Linguistics Expert Committee of the Union Culture Ministry.
- The Linguistics Expert Committee comprises representatives of the Union Ministries of Home, Culture and four to five linguistic experts at any given time. It is chaired by the president of the Sahitya Akademi.
- The new criteria will be officially notified once approved by the Union Cabinet.

- It has **delayed the consideration of languages like Marathi for classical status.**
- There have been **demands from other languages groups to classify their languages as classical language.** For example Bengali, Tulu etc.
- According to National Education Policy-2020 **works of literature of Pali, Persian, and Prakrit shall also be preserved.**

Arguments for Inclusion of Various Languages as Classical Language

Bengali

- According to the language family, **Bengali is categorised as a Modern or New Indo- Aryan language of the Indo-European language family.**
- **Bengali alphabets and terms started to appear in the literatures of as early as 10th century AD.** Since then it had gone through significant stages of development to finally take the present shape.
- However, a panel established by the Bengal government established that **Bengali's origin is 2,500 years ago with concrete evidence showing its written existence as early as the 3rd-4th BCE.**
- Research indicates **that bengali retains its fundamental syntactic structure, as well as its distinct morphological and phonological patterns, throughout its course of evolution at least from 3rd BCE.**

Tulu

- Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in two coastal districts Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- Scholars suggest Tulu is the language that was segregated from the original Dravidian languages some 2,000 years ago and is one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family.
- The language has also been mentioned in the Sangama Literature of Tamil and in Greek Mythology.
- Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition with folk-song forms like paddana, and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.