



Forest Expansion and Indigenous Tribes - GS III Mains

Q. Bring out the implications of forest expansion on India's indigenous tribes and suggest measures to protect their sustainability. (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *Will global forest expansion hit tribals? | Explained*

What's in the news?

- At a recent symposium hosted by the University of Arizona, attention was drawn to the apprehensions surrounding the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its potential ramifications, with a particular focus on the impact it may have on the indigenous tribes of India.

Implications of Forest Expansion on India's Indigenous Tribes:

1. Restriction of Traditional Land Use Practices:

- Forest expansion may limit the traditional land use practices of indigenous communities, affecting their livelihoods and leading to increased poverty and food insecurity.

2. Threat to Indigenous Existence:

- Expansion of protected areas may pose a threat to the existence of indigenous populations, as a significant percentage of national parks are established in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples.

3. Displacement of Tribal Villages:

- Initiatives such as upgrading wildlife sanctuaries to tiger reserves or expanding existing sanctuaries may lead to the displacement of tribal villages, affecting indigenous communities' rights and heritage.

Utilizing Indigenous Tribes in Biodiversity Conservation:

1. Preserving Cultural Heritage through Ecotourism:

- Support ecotourism initiatives led by indigenous communities to preserve cultural heritage, generate income, and safeguard wildlife.

2. Integrating Traditional Knowledge:

- Leverage traditional knowledge of indigenous tribes for biodiversity conservation by integrating it with scientific surveys and conservation plans.

3. Promoting Co-Management Models:

- Expand co-management models where indigenous communities work alongside forest departments to manage protected areas, fostering a sense of ownership and leveraging indigenous knowledge.



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Way Forward:

1. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):

- Uphold FPIC as a mandatory requirement before establishing protected areas on tribal lands, ensuring indigenous communities have a say in conservation efforts.

2. Social Impact Assessment:

- Conduct social impact assessments to understand the potential effects of protected area expansion on existing livelihoods, aligning policies with international standards and principles.

3. Alignment with International Standards:

- Align national policies with UNDRIP principles, respecting indigenous rights and knowledge systems while implementing conservation efforts.

