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ENVIRONMENT

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**ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY, & WILDLIFE-
RELATED BILLS / ACTS / SCHEMS – Part 1**

PART 1

**ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY, AND WILDLIFE-RELATED BILLS
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ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY, AND WILDLIFE-RELATED BILLS AND ACTS

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Objective: To protect wild animals, birds, and plants, and ensure ecological and environmental security by restricting hunting and regulating trade in wildlife and its derivatives.

Key Provisions:

- Establishes protected areas like national parks, sanctuaries, conservation reserves, and community reserves.
- Includes four schedules (amended in 2022) with varying protection levels:
 - Schedule I and II: Absolute protection with severe penalties for offenses.
 - Schedule III and IV: Lower protection levels.
- Prohibits hunting except for dangerous or diseased animals, with permission from the Chief Wildlife Warden.
- Established the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and State Wildlife Advisory Boards for policy advice and management of protected areas.
- Facilitates India's participation in CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).
- Established the Central Zoo Authority (1992) for zoo oversight.
- **Amendments:**
 - 2002: Strengthened penalties for poaching and trade.
 - 2006: Further tightened regulations.
 - 2022: Reduced schedules to four, aligned with CITES, removed the vermin schedule, introduced stricter management plans for sanctuaries and conservation reserves, and provisions for voluntary surrender of captive animals without compensation.
- **Significance:** A cornerstone legislation for wildlife conservation, addressing poaching, habitat destruction, and illegal trade.
- **Update (2025):** No new amendments since 2022, but increased enforcement against poaching and habitat restoration efforts continue, as noted in recent MoEFCC reports.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** The act facilitates India's compliance with CITES (joined in 1976) by regulating trade in endangered species listed in CITES Appendices (e.g., tigers, elephants, rhinos). The 2022 amendment further aligned schedules with CITES to strengthen trade controls. The



Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) coordinates enforcement with CITES mechanisms.

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The act supports CBD objectives (India joined in 1994) by protecting wildlife and habitats, contributing to biodiversity conservation.

UPSC Relevance: Frequently tested in UPSC Prelims and Mains (General Studies Paper III) for its schedules, protected areas, and amendments. Questions often focus on species listed in Schedule I (e.g., tiger, elephant) or the role of NBWL and CZA. The 2022 amendment, removing the vermin schedule and aligning with CITES, is a key current affairs topic.

Unique Features: The act introduced community reserves, a novel category involving local communities in conservation, and the Central Zoo Authority, a pioneering body for zoo regulation in India. It is one of the earliest wildlife-specific laws globally, reflecting India's proactive conservation stance.

Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974

Objective: To prevent and control water pollution and maintain or restore water quality.

Key Provisions:

- Established Central and State Pollution Control Boards to regulate water quality and prevent pollution.
- Defines pollution as contamination or alteration of water's physical, chemical, or biological properties.
- Empowers boards to set standards and monitor compliance.
- **Significance:** Pioneering legislation for water pollution control, addressing industrial, agricultural, and domestic waste.
- **Update (2025):** Ongoing efforts to strengthen water quality monitoring, particularly for industrial effluents, with no new amendments since 2017.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **No Direct Alignment:** The act aligns broadly with global goals like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation) but is not directly tied to a specific international environmental protocol or convention. Its focus is primarily domestic, addressing India's water pollution challenges.

UPSC Relevance: A key topic in UPSC Prelims and Mains for its role in establishing Pollution Control Boards and addressing water pollution issues like river cleaning (e.g., Ganga). Questions often cover the powers of CPCB/SPCBs or water quality standards.



Unique Features: The act was India's first comprehensive legislation for water pollution control, introducing a robust institutional framework (CPCB/SPCBs) for environmental regulation, later replicated in other laws like the Air Act.

Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

Objective: To regulate air pollutant emissions and maintain air quality.

Key Provisions:

- Empowers State Pollution Control Boards to inspect factories, set emission standards, and enforce compliance.
- Prohibits industries from operating without meeting emission standards.
- **Significance:** Addresses air pollution from industrial and other sources, ensuring cleaner air.
- **Update (2025):** Stricter enforcement in urban areas like Delhi due to persistent air quality issues, with no legislative amendments reported.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **No Direct Alignment:** The act aligns indirectly with global frameworks like the World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines and the UNFCCC (by reducing emissions that contribute to climate change). However, it is not explicitly linked to a specific international environmental protocol or convention, focusing on domestic air quality management.

UPSC Relevance: Frequently appears in UPSC Prelims and Mains, especially in questions about urban air pollution, AQI (Air Quality Index), and the role of SPCBs. Recent enforcement in cities like Delhi and the NCAP linkage are current affairs hotspots.

Unique Features: The act introduced the concept of air quality standards for industrial emissions in India, complementing the Water Act's framework and enabling coordinated pollution control through SPCBs.

Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

Objective: To prevent deforestation and regulate the use of forest land for non-forest purposes.

Key Provisions:

- Requires central government approval for diverting forest land for non-forest use.



- Promotes afforestation and conservation of forest ecosystems.
- **Amendments:**
 - 2023: Relaxed restrictions on forest land use for development projects, allowing certain non-forest activities (e.g., infrastructure, tourism) without prior approval in some cases.
- **Significance:** Balances development with forest conservation, protecting biodiversity and ecological balance.
- **Update (2025):** The 2023 amendment has raised concerns among environmentalists about potential deforestation, with ongoing debates on X and environmental forums about its impact.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** The act supports India's UNFCCC commitments (joined in 1993) by promoting afforestation and forest conservation, contributing to carbon sequestration and India's NDC target of creating a carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** By protecting forest ecosystems, the act aligns with CBD objectives (India joined in 1994) for biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use.
- **United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF):** The act supports UNFF goals (India is a member) by promoting sustainable forest management.

UPSC Relevance: A high-priority topic in UPSC exams, especially for the 2023 amendment's implications on development vs. conservation debates. Questions often focus on forest diversion processes, compensatory afforestation, and CAMPA's role.

Unique Features: The act's requirement for central government approval for forest land diversion is a distinctive mechanism to curb deforestation, complemented by mandatory compensatory afforestation, a model adopted globally.

Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Objective: To protect and improve the environment, addressing gaps in existing legislation.

Key Provisions:

- Empowers the central government to set standards for emissions, discharges, and hazardous waste management.
- Covers air, water, soil, and noise pollution.
- Includes notifications like Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) 1991 (superseded by 2011 and 2019), Doon Valley

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Notification (1989), and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA, 1994, updated 2006).

- **Significance:** An umbrella legislation for comprehensive environmental protection, enacted post-Bhopal Gas Tragedy and influenced by the 1972 Stockholm Conference.
- **Update (2025):** The 2020 EIA draft notification remains un-finalized due to public backlash, with current EIA processes under scrutiny for balancing development and conservation.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972):** The act was influenced by the Stockholm Conference, which emphasized global environmental governance and prompted stronger environmental laws in India.
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** The act supports UNFCCC goals by regulating emissions and promoting sustainable development, aligning with India's NDCs under the Paris Agreement (ratified in 2016).
- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal:** The act's hazardous waste provisions align with the Basel Convention (India joined in 1992).
- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** The act supports the Stockholm Convention (India joined in 2006) by regulating hazardous chemicals.
- **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade:** The act aligns with the Rotterdam Convention (India joined in 2005) by controlling hazardous chemical trade.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The act supports CBD objectives through environmental measures that conserve biodiversity.

UPSC Relevance: A core topic in UPSC Prelims and Mains, with frequent questions on EIA, CRZ, and the act's role as an umbrella legislation. The 2020 EIA draft controversy and Bhopal Gas Tragedy context are key for mains answers.

Unique Features: The act's broad scope, covering all environmental aspects (air, water, soil, noise), and its enabling notifications (e.g., CRZ, EIA) make it a versatile tool for environmental governance, unique in its post-disaster (Bhopal) origin.



Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Objective: To conserve biodiversity, ensure sustainable use of biological resources, and prevent biopiracy.

Key Provisions:

- Establishes a three-tier structure: National Biodiversity Authority, State Biodiversity Boards, and local Biodiversity Management Committees.
- Regulates access to biological resources and benefit-sharing.
- Aligns with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- **Significance:** Protects India's rich biodiversity and supports local communities' rights over biological resources.
- **Update (2025):** Strengthened focus on local Biodiversity Management Committees to curb biopiracy, with no major amendments.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The act directly implements India's commitments under the CBD (joined in 1994), focusing on biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and equitable benefit-sharing.
- **Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing:** The act aligns with the Nagoya Protocol (adopted 2010, India joined in 2014) by regulating access to genetic resources and ensuring fair benefit-sharing with local communities.

UPSC Relevance: A critical topic in UPSC exams, with questions on the three-tier structure, biopiracy, and CBD/Nagoya Protocol linkages. The role of BMCs in protecting traditional knowledge is a recurring theme.

Unique Features: The act's three-tier structure (NBA, SBBs, BMCs) is a distinctive decentralized model for biodiversity governance, and its focus on biopiracy prevention is globally recognized.

Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006

Objective: To recognize and vest forest rights in forest-dwelling communities, addressing historical injustices.

Key Provisions:

- Grants title rights to land (up to 4 hectares) cultivated by forest dwellers.
- Recognizes rights to minor forest produce, grazing areas, and pastoralist routes.
- Promotes sustainable use and biodiversity conservation.



- **Significance:** Empowers forest-dwelling communities while strengthening forest conservation.
- **Update (2025):** Implementation challenges persist, with ongoing discussions on X about balancing forest rights with conservation goals.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The act supports CBD objectives by promoting sustainable use of forest resources and protecting traditional knowledge of forest-dwelling communities.
- **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007):** While not a binding convention, the act aligns with UNDRIP principles (India endorsed in 2007) by recognizing the rights of forest-dwelling indigenous and tribal communities.

UPSC Relevance: A key topic in UPSC Mains (General Studies Paper II and III) for its social justice and environmental implications. Questions often cover implementation challenges, community vs. conservation conflicts, and minor forest produce rights.

Unique Features: The act's recognition of community forest rights and minor forest produce is a pioneering approach to integrating indigenous rights with conservation, setting a precedent for participatory forest management.

National Green Tribunal Act, 2010

Objective: To ensure fast and effective disposal of environment-related legal cases.

Key Provisions:

- Established the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for handling cases related to environmental protection and conservation.
- Empowers NGT to impose penalties and issue orders for environmental compliance.
- **Significance:** Provides a specialized judicial mechanism for environmental disputes, enhancing enforcement.
- **Update (2025):** NGT remains active, with recent rulings on air pollution and illegal mining, reinforcing its role in enforcement.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972):** The NGT aligns with the Stockholm Conference's call for effective environmental governance and dispute resolution mechanisms.



- **UNFCCC, CBD, Basel, Stockholm, and Rotterdam Conventions:** The NGT indirectly supports compliance with these conventions by adjudicating cases related to climate change, biodiversity, and hazardous waste management, ensuring India meets international obligations.

UPSC Relevance: Frequently tested in UPSC exams for its role in environmental justice. Questions focus on NGT's powers, landmark cases (e.g., Yamuna River, illegal mining), and its linkage to international conventions.

Unique Features: The NGT is one of the few specialized environmental tribunals globally, with the power to apply principles like polluter pays and precautionary principles, making it a model for environmental jurisprudence.

Energy Conservation Act, 2001

Objective: To improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact of energy consumption.

Key Provisions:

- Establishes the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to set energy consumption standards for equipment and appliances.
- Promotes energy conservation building codes for commercial buildings.
- **Significance:** Supports environmental sustainability by reducing energy-related emissions.
- **Update (2025):** BEE introduced stricter energy efficiency standards for appliances in 2024-2025, aligning with India's climate goals.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** The act supports UNFCCC objectives by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency, contributing to India's NDCs under the Paris Agreement (ratified in 2016).

UPSC Relevance: Appears in UPSC exams for its role in climate change mitigation and energy efficiency. Questions often cover BEE's star-rating program and India's NDC commitments.

Unique Features: The BEE's star-rating program for appliances is a globally recognized initiative, promoting consumer awareness and energy efficiency in a rapidly growing economy.

Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (Amended 2021)



Objective: To regulate plastic waste and reduce environmental pollution.

Key Provisions:

- Mandates phasing out of single-use plastics (completed in 2022).
- Introduces extended producer responsibility (EPR) for plastic waste management.
- Sets guidelines for plastic recycling and waste disposal.
- **Significance:** Addresses plastic pollution, promoting sustainable waste management practices.
- **Update (2025):** Enforcement of single-use plastic bans continues, with increased focus on EPR compliance.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal:** The rules align with the Basel Convention (India joined in 1992) by managing plastic waste, classified as hazardous under the 2019 plastic waste amendments, ensuring environmentally sound disposal and restricting transboundary movement.

UPSC Relevance: A hot topic in UPSC exams due to the single-use plastic ban and EPR framework. Questions often link to plastic pollution's environmental impact and Basel Convention compliance.

Unique Features: The 2022 single-use plastic ban is one of the most ambitious in the world, and the EPR framework places responsibility on producers, a progressive approach to waste management.

Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notifications, 1991 (Superseded by CRZ Notification, 2011 and 2019)

Objective: To protect coastal ecosystems and regulate coastal zone activities.

Key Provisions:

- Divides coastal areas into four zones (CRZ I, II, III, IV) with specific regulations:
 - CRZ I: Ecologically sensitive areas (e.g., mangroves, coral reefs) with strict restrictions.
 - CRZ II: Developed areas near the shoreline.
 - CRZ III: Rural coastal areas.
 - CRZ IV: Territorial waters.
- Prohibits dumping of waste and regulates industrial activities.

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- 2019 Notification: Relaxed restrictions to promote coastal tourism and development, with provisions for sustainable management.
- **Significance:** Protects coastal ecosystems and livelihoods of coastal communities.
- **Update (2025):** The 2019 notification has sparked concerns about ecological impacts due to relaxed regulations, as discussed on X and environmental platforms.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971):** CRZ I zones include Ramsar sites (e.g., Chilika Lake), supporting India's obligations (joined in 1982) to conserve wetlands of international importance.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The CRZ notifications protect coastal biodiversity (e.g., mangroves, coral reefs), aligning with CBD objectives.
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** By protecting coastal ecosystems, the CRZ contributes to climate resilience and carbon sequestration, supporting India's NDCs.

UPSC Relevance: A staple in UPSC exams, with questions on CRZ zones, the 2019 notification's implications, and Ramsar site conservation. The balance between coastal development and ecology is a key mains topic.

Unique Features: The CRZ's zoning system is a unique regulatory approach, balancing conservation with development, and its protection of mangroves and coral reefs is critical for coastal biodiversity.

Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 (Amended 2017)

Objective: To protect and manage wetlands sustainably.

Key Provisions:

- Regulates activities in wetlands to prevent degradation.
- Supports conservation of Ramsar sites and other wetlands.
- **Significance:** Protects critical aquatic ecosystems that support biodiversity and water security.
- **Update (2025):** Increased focus on wetland restoration under NPCA, with no new amendments since 2017.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971):** The rules directly implement India's commitments under the Ramsar



Convention (joined in 1982), ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of 75 Ramsar sites (as of 2025).

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The rules support CBD objectives by protecting wetland biodiversity.

UPSC Relevance: Frequently tested in UPSC Prelims for Ramsar sites (e.g., Chilika, Sundarbans) and wetland conservation policies. Mains questions often explore wetland ecosystem services and NPCA linkage.

Unique Features: The rules' focus on Ramsar sites and decentralized wetland management through state governments is a distinctive approach, enhancing India's global leadership in wetland conservation.

E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016 (Amended 2022)

Objective: To regulate the management and disposal of electronic waste to minimize environmental and health impacts.

Key Provisions:

- Mandates extended producer responsibility (EPR) for manufacturers to manage e-waste collection and recycling.
- Sets targets for e-waste collection and environmentally sound disposal.
- Prohibits hazardous substances in electronic equipment.
- **Significance:** Addresses the growing issue of e-waste, protecting soil and water from contamination.
- **Update (2025):** The 2022 amendment strengthened EPR enforcement, with increased monitoring of e-waste recycling units reported in 2025.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal:** The rules align with the Basel Convention (India joined in 1992) by regulating e-waste as a hazardous waste, ensuring environmentally sound management and restricting transboundary movement.
- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** The rules support the Stockholm Convention (India joined in 2006) by controlling hazardous substances (e.g., brominated flame retardants) in electronics.

UPSC Relevance: Increasingly relevant in UPSC exams due to rising e-waste concerns. Questions focus on EPR, hazardous substances, and Basel Convention linkages.



Unique Features: The EPR model for e-waste is a forward-looking mechanism, making producers responsible for the entire lifecycle of electronics, a practice gaining global traction.

Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016

Objective: To regulate the handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous and other wastes to prevent environmental pollution.

Key Provisions:

- Defines procedures for safe handling, transport, and disposal of hazardous wastes.
- Regulates transboundary movement of hazardous wastes in line with the Basel Convention.
- Mandates recycling and treatment facilities to meet environmental standards.
- **Significance:** Protects ecosystems and public health from hazardous waste pollution. Complements the Environment (Protection) Act, addressing a critical gap in hazardous waste management.
- **Update (2025):** Recent enforcement efforts focus on industrial compliance, with stricter penalties for violations noted in 2025 environmental reports.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal:** The rules directly implement India's obligations under the Basel Convention (joined in 1992), regulating hazardous waste movement and disposal.
- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs):** The rules support the Stockholm Convention by managing wastes containing POPs.
- **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade:** The rules align with the Rotterdam Convention (India joined in 2005) by regulating trade in hazardous chemicals.

UPSC Relevance: A niche but important topic in UPSC exams, with questions on hazardous waste management, Basel Convention, and industrial pollution control.

Unique Features: The rules' comprehensive framework for hazardous waste, including transboundary movement, aligns with global standards, addressing both environmental and health risks.



ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE-RELATED GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND MISSIONS

Project Tiger (1973)

Objective: To conserve tigers and their habitats.

Details:

- Sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- Established tiger reserves across India, covering 2.21% of the country's geographical area.
- Supports anti-poaching measures, habitat restoration, and community involvement.
- **Impact:** Increased tiger population from 1,827 in 1972 to 3,167 in 2022-23 (per latest census).
- **Update (2025):** Continued success with strengthened anti-poaching measures and habitat restoration.

International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** Project Tiger supports CITES by protecting tigers (Appendix I) through anti-poaching measures and trade regulation.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The project aligns with CBD objectives by conserving tiger habitats and biodiversity in reserves.

UPSC Relevance: A flagship topic in UPSC exams, with questions on tiger reserves, population trends, and CITES. The 2022-23 census data is a key current affairs point.

Unique Features: Project Tiger is one of the world's most successful conservation programs, with a network of 53 tiger reserves and community involvement as a hallmark of its success.

Project Elephant (1992)

Objective: To protect elephants, their habitats, and migration corridors.

Details:

- Covers 32 elephant reserves across 58,000 square kilometers.
- Funds research, veterinary care, and conservation education.
- Addresses human-elephant conflict through mitigation strategies.
- **Impact:** Supports conservation of wild elephants in states like Assam, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand.
- **Update (2025):** Expanded efforts to secure elephant corridors to reduce human-elephant conflicts.



International Protocol/Convention Alignment:

- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** The project supports CITES by protecting Indian elephants (Appendix I) from illegal trade in ivory and other derivatives.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** It aligns with CBD goals by conserving elephant habitats and promoting biodiversity.

UPSC Relevance: Tested in UPSC exams for its focus on human-wildlife conflict and elephant corridors. Questions often link to CITES and conservation challenges in specific states.

Unique Features: The project's emphasis on elephant corridors is a unique strategy to ensure safe migration, addressing a critical conservation challenge in human-dominated landscapes.



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