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The Supreme Court delivered a significant 8:1 judgment affirming that State Legislatures have the power to tax mining lands and quarries, independent of the Parliament's Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act of 1957 (MMDR Act).

### Case Background

- The case, Mineral Area Development Authority v. M/s Steel Authority of India, pending for over 25 years, was decided by an 8-1 split, with Chief Justice DY Chandrachud authoring the majority opinion.

## 'States have unlimited right to tax mineral-rich lands'

Constitution Bench, in an 8:1 verdict, holds that Parliament, through Mines and Minerals Act, cannot restrict States from legislating on the taxation of mining lands, quarries; any dilution will impact their ability to raise revenues; the verdict came in a batch of 86 appeals filed by different State govts., mining firms, and public sector undertakings

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

**A** nine-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, on Thursday held by an 8:1 majority that Parliament cannot limit the power of State legislatures to tax mineral-bearing lands and quarries. The judgment, freeing States from the restrictions imposed by the Centre, is in tune with the federalist principles of governance.

"Any dilution in the taxing powers of the State legislatures will necessarily impact their ability to raise revenues, which in turn will impede their ability to deliver welfare schemes and services to the people. The ability of the State governments to invest in

physical infrastructure, health, education, human capacity, and research and development is directly correlated to the raising of government revenues... Fiscal federalism entails that the power of the States to levy taxes within the legislative domain carved out to them and subject to the limitations laid down by the Constitution must be secured from unconstitutional interference by Parliament," the Chief Justice said.

The verdict noted how mineral-rich States such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha continue to have per capita income below the national average.

The judgment said Parliament, through the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act of 1957 cannot restrict the



Fiscal federalism entails that the power of the States to levy taxes within the legislative domain carved out to them and subject to the limitations laid down by the Constitution must be secured from unconstitutional interference by Parliament

**D.Y. CHANDRACHUD**  
Chief Justice of India

States from legislating on the taxation of mining lands and quarries.

#### 'Royalty not a tax'

The court further held that royalty paid to the States by mining lease holders is not a tax.

"Royalty is not a tax. Royalty is a contractual consideration paid by the mining lessee to the lessor for enjoyment of mineral

rights," the Chief Justice Chandrachud said.

The judgment came in a batch of 86 appeals filed by different State governments, mining companies and public sector undertakings.

The case has its roots in a dispute between India Cements Ltd. and the Tamil Nadu government.

Chief Justice Chandrachud said State legislatures

derive their power to tax mines and quarries under Article 246 read with Entry 49 (tax on lands and buildings) in the State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

"Mineral-bearing lands fall within the description of 'lands' in Entry 49," Chief Justice Chandrachud held.

In the sole dissenting opinion on the Constitution Bench, Justice B.V. Nagarathna said the States' power to tax under Entry 49 of List II did not include "mineral-bearing lands". However, Justice Nagarathna agreed with the majority on the Bench that royalty was not a tax.

The Centre had argued that Entry 50 in the State List had allowed the Parliament to impose "any limitations" on taxes on miner-

al rights through laws relating to mineral development, in this case, the MMDR Act.

However, the Chief Justice responded in the judgment to the argument by noting that Entries 50 and 49 of the State List "deal with distinct subject matters and operate in different fields".

The limitations imposed by Parliament in a law like the MMDR Act, which related to mineral development, did not operate on or influence State taxation of mining lands under Entry 49 in the State List for the sole reason that "there is no specific stipulation in the Constitution to that effect".

"Entry 50 of List II does not constitute an exception... The power to tax mineral rights vests in the

State Legislatures. The Parliament does not have the legislative competence to tax mineral rights, with Entry 54 of the Union List (Regulation of mines and minerals development declared by parliamentary law to be expedient in the public interest) being only a general entry. Power to tax mineral rights is enumerated in List II. The Parliament cannot use its residuary powers with respect to that subject matter," Chief Justice Chandrachud held.

Justice Nagarathna, however, agreed that the MMDR Act, especially the provision which allows the Centre to take "control of the regulation of mines and the development of minerals" on expediency in public interest, denuded or limited the scope of a State's right to tax.

### Understanding Royalties and Taxes

- Royalties are fees paid for the right to use a product, distinct from taxes.
- Section 9 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDRA) requires leaseholders to pay royalties to those leasing the land.

### Legal Questions and Historical Decisions

- The Supreme Court's 1989 India Cement Ltd v. State of Tamil Nadu decision initially deemed royalties as taxes, a position challenged and revisited over the years.
- In 2004, State of West Bengal v. Kesoram Industries Ltd clarified that royalties are not taxes, correcting a typographical error from the India Cement decision.
- The Mineral Area Development Authority case sought to resolve conflicts arising from these interpretations.

### Majority Decision: Royalties Are Not Taxes

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ The majority ruled that royalties are payments based on specific contracts between leaseholders and lessors, not taxes.
- ✚ Taxes serve public purposes, while royalties compensate lessors for exclusive mineral rights.

**“ Royalty is not a tax. Royalty is a contractual consideration paid by the mining lessee to lessor for enjoyment of mineral rights. The liability to pay royalty arises out of the contractual conditions of the mining lease. Payments made to the govt cannot be deemed to be a tax merely because the statute provides for their recovery as arrears —SC's majority order**

**The state legislatures have legislative competence under Article 246 read with Entry 49-List II to tax lands and buildings but not lands which comprise of mines and quarries or have mineral deposits as mineral bearing lands do not fall within the description of lands (under Entry 49-List II)**  
— Justice B V Nagarathna's dissenting order in 8:1 verdict

### States' Power to Tax Mineral Development

- ✚ The court held that states can tax mineral development activities, independent of the MMDRA, under Entry 50 of the State List, which grants exclusive state powers over mineral rights taxes.
- ✚ Entry 54 of the Union List grants the Centre regulatory power over mines and mineral development but not taxing power.

### Dissenting Opinion by Justice Nagarathna

- ✚ Justice Nagarathna argued that royalties should be considered taxes to maintain uniform mineral development.
- ✚ She believed the MMDRA's purpose would be undermined by allowing states to impose additional levies.
- ✚ She also contended that the MMDRA denuded states' taxing powers post-enactment and that Entry 49 of the State List does not permit taxing mineral-bearing land.

### Implications

- ✚ This ruling allows states to generate additional revenue through taxes on mining activities and land used for mining, providing clarity on the distinction between royalties and taxes and reinforcing states' fiscal autonomy in mineral development..

## UPSC Mains PYQ : 2014

**Ques :** Though the federal principle is dominant in our Constitution and that principle is one of its basic features, but it is equally true that federalism under the Indian Constitution leans in favour of a strong Centre, a feature that militates against the concept of strong federalism.

Christopher Thomas Kurien (2 July 1931–23 July 2024), was a distinguished economist and former Professor at Madras Christian.

## A notable life of a scholar-economist of distinction and social conscience

**V.K. Ramachandran**

Christopher Thomas Kurien, known as CTK to those whose lives and minds he touched, was one of South India's finest and most influential teachers of economics. CTK's entry into economics was inspired by the vision of the "Tryst with Destiny" speech, and in particular Jawaharlal Nehru's exhortation that "the service of India means...the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity". As he explained in a 2012 interview published in the newsletter of the World Economics Association, when he decided in his final high school year to take up the study of economics, it was in the hope "I would be able to understand the causes of poverty and contribute to its eradication."

It was this quest that spurred CTK's scholarly efforts for the next seven decades. Amartya Sen, reflecting on the general dissatisfaction with eco-

nomics, once remarked that this was experienced in India with probably even better reason, "because in some ways, economic problems are more serious, more nasty in India than they were in many other parts of the world".

So it was with CTK. It was the 1950s and he was now a lecturer at the Madras Christian College, Tambaram. His restlessness over the "disjunction between theory and real-life issues" made him want to equip himself in economic theory. He decided to study for a Ph.D. and enrolled in the doctoral programme at Stanford University in 1958.

Stanford was then a special kind of hub of debate in the discipline of economics. There, CTK took the first major steps in what would be a lifelong endeavour: to test theory by confronting it with the economic problems of India. He set himself the task of testing the claims to universality of neoclassical economics by applying it

to probe the literature on surplus labour. At the end of this endeavour, the scales had fallen from his eyes. What he wanted now was "a conceptualisation of the economy other than what neo-classical theory provided and what 'dual economy' models assuming subsistence wages implied was necessary for a proper understanding of the...problems of the Indian economy".

He had developed an alternative: he was able to show that "the distribution of non-labour resources was the essence of understanding India's economy and its problems". In teaching undergraduate courses, he maintained that three related questions were required to understand an economy: "Who owns what?", "Who does what?", and "Who gets what?"

And so, in the 1960s, back to the Madras Christian College, where CTK designed and taught a course titled Indian Economic Problems (IEP). I



C.T. KURIEN (JULY 2, 1931-JULY 23, 2024)

had the good fortune of being a student in CTK's IEP class in 1969-72. He was a demanding taskmaster and one of the first things his course did was to teach us to use economic theory to build a toolbox with which to examine and analyse specific problems of the Indian economy. He then helped us study a wide range of sectors of the economy – agriculture, livestock, industry, the informal sector, banking, major services, marketing and trade, Plan models, the public sector, and much more – using these conceptual

tools. The years from 1968 to 1978, his last decade at the Madras Christian College, were not only years of teaching but also of productive research and writing. In this period, CTK published, among other writings, *Indian Economic Crisis* (1968), *A Theoretical Approach to the Indian Economy* (1969), and, in 1978, his more widely known book of the period, *Poverty, Planning and Social Transformation* (the last book in the list being dedicated to "my teachers, many of them my students,

who asked questions)."

In 1974, CTK proposed a rural employment guarantee scheme (in the form of a "land army") for India; the first person, as far as I know, to have done so. In 2021, on the occasion of CTK's 90th birthday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, paying tribute to a "consistent supporter of policies that benefit the vast majority of people", drew particular attention to the fact that CTK had been an early advocate of a rural employment guarantee.

### MIDS term

In 1978, CTK took the major decision to leave the Madras Christian College to become the founder Director of the Madras Institute of Development Studies. MIDS, which had been established by CTK's teacher Malcolm Adiseshiah some years earlier, had been made a National Institute of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. Under CTK's distinguished and democratic leader-

ship, MIDS became the first and foremost Centre for the study of the Tamil Nadu economy. This concentration on regional economics was reflected also in the books CTK wrote over the period, including *Dynamics of Rural Transformation* (1979) and *Economic Change in Tamil Nadu* (with Josef James, 1979).

After he retired from the directorship of MIDS, CTK was a National Professor of the University Grants Commission and a National Fellow of the ICSSR. The books of his early retirement years, including *On Markets in Economic Theory and Policy* (1993) and *Rethinking Economics: Reflections Based on a Study of the Indian Economy* (1996), were the product of many years of thinking about India's economy. In his last two books, *Wealth and Illfare: An Expedition into Real Life Economics* (2012) and *Economics of Real-Life: A New Exposition* (2018), CTK sought to reconnect with the young, to reach out to new students

of economics who were struggling, as he had done in the 1950s, with the "disjunction between theory and real-life issues".

Another feature of his retirement years was a new interest in writing book reviews, mainly in *Frontline* magazine. This was his way of keeping touch with current thinking, particularly in economics.

When CTK taught his Indian economy course, a question he asked when we began and ended was "What is the major problem of the Indian economy today?" And he was in no doubt about the answer. The world is a poorer place for the death of people like CTK, those who help us identify poverty and its social and economic characteristics and inspire us to come together to fight for a just society.

(V.K. Ramachandran, an economist, is Vice-Chairperson of the Kerala State Planning Board. A longer text of this article can be read at [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com).)

- ✚ He served as president of Indian Economic Association in 2000.
- ✚ He authored 15 books that focused on various aspects of economics, with a particular emphasis on poverty eradication.
- ✚ He was known for his criticism of mainstream economics for not addressing poverty effectively and advocated for economic policies aimed at reducing poverty.

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) revamped the 'model skill loan scheme' for skill development courses, with a fresh maximum loan limit of ₹7.5 lakh.

- ✚ The earlier (launched in 2015) Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Skill Development (CGFSSD) had a maximum loan limit of ₹1.5 lakh.

### Challenges Faced by the CGFSSD:

- ✚ **Low fund utilisation under the scheme:** As on March 31, 2024, loans amounting to ₹115.75 crore had been extended to just 10,077 borrowers. This was mainly due to low ticket size of loans (upto ₹1.5 lakh).
- ✚ **Inflation:** As course costs and fees rose due to inflation, many of the high-cost courses were left out of the scheme.
- ✚ **Less number of lending institutions:** Only member lending institutes of the Indian Banking Association (IBA) were allowed to lend earlier, and there was low uptake by both private and public sector banks due to their limited reach.

### Need for a Revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme:

- ✚ **To fill the skill gap:** Only 5% of the so-called skilled workforce is formally skilled and hence there is a huge skilling gap that needs to be filled.
- ✚ **Adapting to rapid technological and societal shifts:** As India (and the world) is undergoing rapid technological and societal shifts, India's education systems and job market must adapt to keep pace and work hard towards a vision for 2047.
- ✚ **To integrate new-age learning:** As the 'Skill Economy' is increasingly market-led, new-age learning must be integrated into the skill development ecosystem.

### The Revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme:

- ✚ **Background:** In her Budget 2024-25 speech, the Finance Minister had announced the model skill loan scheme.

## Minister launches revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme

**Maitri Porecha**  
NEW DELHI

Skill Development Minister Jayant Chaudhary launched the revamped Model Skill Loan Scheme on Thursday, two days after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced hiking the eligible size of loans for high-end skilling courses under the scheme to ₹7.5 lakh from ₹1.5 lakh.

### Low fund uptake

The earlier Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Skill Development, notified in November 2015 to create a credit guarantee fund for courses aligned to the National Skills Qualification Framework, faced multiple challenges. As on March 31, loans amounting to ₹115.75 crore had been extended to just 10,077 borrowers.

Skill Development Ministry officials said the low fund utilisation over the past decade under the scheme was due to low ticket size of loans (up to ₹1.5 lakh), even as course costs and fees rose due to inflation, leaving many high-cost courses out of the scheme.

"Only member lending institutes of the Indian Banking Association (IBA) were allowed to lend earlier, and there was low uptake by both private and public sector banks due to their limited reach," a Ministry official added.

Under the new scheme, the lending network has been broadened from only IBA banks to include Non Banking Financial Companies and small finance banks, with access to more skill courses and higher loan limits.

## Daily News Analysis

### + **About the scheme:**

- The scheme is aimed at providing easy access to advanced-level skill courses, which potentially pose a significant financial barrier for many deserving students and candidates to gain futuristic and in-demand industry skills.
- The scheme empowers youth with financial support for advanced skilling, through the instrument of collateral-free loans up to ₹7.5 lakh.

### + **How is it an upgrade over the earlier scheme?**

- The maximum ticket size of individual loans eligible for credit guarantee cover has been increased to ₹7.50 lakhs from the earlier limit of ₹1.50 lakhs.
- Under the new scheme, the lending network has been broadened from only IBA banks to include Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and small finance banks.
- The revised scheme will now allow access to more skill courses, against only national skill qualification framework (NSQF)-aligned courses under the old scheme.
- Also, non-NSQF courses that are on boarded on the Skill India Digital Hub platform will come under the scheme.

### + **Significance:**

- By ensuring uninterrupted credit flow in the skilling sector and by providing low-income youths with access to affordable finance for specialised skill courses, this scheme is expected to help 25,000 students every year
- With the help of this initiative, aspiring candidates can choose from a plethora of skill courses in sectors such as healthcare, IT, AI-data science, cloud application, digital marketing, gaming, drone technology, etc.
- These courses, driven by changing industry dynamics, offer substantial placement opportunities and potential for international mobility

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2018

**Ques : With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements:**

1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment
2. It, among other things, will also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy.
3. It aims to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country to the National Skill Qualification Framework.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: d)**

**Page 10 : GS 3 : Indian Economy : Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways Etc.**

On July 13, three workers died of asphyxiation inside an illegal coal mine in Gujarat's Surendranagar district.

# India's illegal coal mining problem

How prevalent is illegal coal mining in India? What are the legal frameworks governing coal mining in India? Why is the responsibility for addressing illegal mining placed on State governments? What factors contribute to the persistence of illegal coal mining? What safety risks do workers face?

**EXPLAINER**

Privali Prakash

**The story so far:**

**O**n July 13, three workers died of asphyxiation inside an illegal coal mine in Gujarat's Surendranagar district. The officials said that the workers were working in a mine near Bhet village in Thangadh taluka without helmets, masks, or other safety equipment. The first information report (FIR) indicated that the accused failed to provide essential safety gear to the labourers, who died after inhaling toxic gas in the mine. The police have registered a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder against four people.

**What is the issue?**

The Surendranagar incident is not an isolated case.

In June 2023, three people, including a ten-year-old child, were reportedly killed after an illegal mine collapsed in the Dhanbad district of Jharkhand. Similarly, at least three people were killed in October 2023 after a coal mine collapsed during illegal extraction in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district.

These are just a few examples of how illegal coal mining has led to worker fatalities in India.

Coal in India was nationalised in two phases: first with the coking coal (used for the production of coke in the steel industry) in 1971-72; and then with the non-coking coal mines in 1973. The Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 is the central legislation that determines eligibility for coal mining in India. Illegal mining constitutes a law and order problem, which is a State list subject. Hence, the onus of dealing with it falls on State governments rather than the Union government.

**Why is illegal coal mining rampant in India?**

According to the Ministry of Coal, illegal



**Mining perils:** Labourers carry baskets of coal from an open-cast mine in Jharkhand. AP

mining in India is mostly carried out in abandoned mines or shallow coal seams in remote or isolated places. Several factors contribute to illegal coal mining in India.

Coal is the most abundant fossil fuel in India, accounting for 55% of the country's energy needs. The high demand for power in India translates into a high demand for coal, which often outstrips the legal supply, prompting illegal supply. Many areas that are rich in coal are also situated close to homes for populations struggling with poverty and unemployment, which contributes to illegal mining in these areas.

In remote areas, mining regulations can be weak due to inadequate monitoring and lack of resources, leading to weaker enforcement. This can result in the rise of "coal mafias," as has been alleged in multiple cases of illegal coal mining in India. For example, in 2018, activist Marshall Biam of the North East Indigenous People's Federation registered a complaint accusing a "police-backed" coal gang of threatening him. Mining tragedies are not uncommon in coal-rich Meghalaya.

Illegal coal mining also allegedly receives tacit support from political leaders in areas where it is prevalent, making it difficult to curb. In 2023, the Assam-based political party Assam Jatiya

Parishad (AJP) submitted a petition each to the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India, the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the National Human Rights Commission and the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, alleging that some BJP leaders are behind illegal coal mining in the State. AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi and general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said that illegal rat-hole coal mining has continued in Assam, as well as in Meghalaya and other north-eastern States, with the alleged patronage of BJP leaders and in collusion with officials despite a blanket ban on such mining by the NGT in 2014.

Illegal mining is often carried out using rudimentary techniques like surface mining and rat-hole mining, rather than the scientific methods required for legal operations on a larger scale. In areas where coal seams are closer to the surface, illegal miners access them with limited safety equipment. Minimal operational costs can also turn into significant profits, making illegal mining lucrative.

**Why do so many workers die in illegal coal mines?**

The lack of safety equipment and protocols is the primary reason for deaths during illegal coal mining. Miners face increased respiratory risks due to inhaling

coal dust, and the lack of safety equipment significantly increases this risk. The miners in the Surendranagar incident also died of carbon monoxide poisoning. According to District Collector K.C. Sampat, 2,100 wells had been filled in recent times, but some of them might have been illegally reopened, where the incident happened.

Illegal mines lack proper structural support to carry out the extraction of coal, making working conditions hazardous and vulnerable to cave-ins, landslides, and explosions. Workers may also be exposed to high levels of toxic substances like lead and mercury, which can cause acute poisoning or long-term chronic medical conditions.

Several people who work in illegal coal mines are untrained for the job and for the risks it poses. There is a lack of proper training, quick response facilities, and knowledge in case of emergencies.

Operator negligence and worker exploitation are also rampant in illegal coal mining.

**Why do governments struggle to cut down illegal coal mining in India?**

Questions regarding illegal coal mining have been raised in the Parliament, but since it is a law and order issue, the Union government often shifts the blame to State authorities. A mix of economic, social, political, and regulatory factors makes it difficult for governments to shut down illegal coal mining in India.

Illegal coal mining, by any means, is not a novelty. It has existed since before coal was nationalised and continues to exist in pockets in coal-rich areas or near abandoned mines. The high demand for coal as a fuel makes illegal mining rampant and challenging to control. Local economies in many areas depend on mining, and once official operations run their course, illegal mining takes its place to support the local community.

The legal framework governing mining is complex, which can possibly lead to bureaucratic hurdles and inefficiency in governance, allowing illegal mining to exist.

**THE GIST**

Three workers died of asphyxiation in an illegal coal mine in Gujarat's Surendranagar district on July 13 due to a lack of safety equipment.

Illegal coal mining is widespread in India and has led to numerous worker deaths.

Illegal mining is a law and order issue falling under State jurisdiction, making State governments responsible for addressing it.

High demand for coal, poverty, unemployment, weak regulations, and alleged political support contribute to the prevalence of illegal coal mining.

**How Prevalent is Illegal Coal Mining in India?**

- ✚ Illegal coal mining has led to multiple fatalities, including recent incidents in Gujarat, Jharkhand, and West Bengal, highlighting its prevalence and dangers.
- ✚ There are 10 workers who have died in illegal mining incidents in Gujarat alone this year, showcasing the ongoing risks associated with this activity.



## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ Illegal mining is often conducted in abandoned mines or shallow coal seams, particularly in remote areas, where monitoring and enforcement of regulations are weak.

### Legal Frameworks Governing Coal Mining in India

- ✚ **Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973:** This act nationalized coal mining in India, regulating who can mine coal and under what conditions.
- ✚ **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act):** This central legislation governs the mining sector, detailing processes for acquiring mining licenses and regulating mining activities. It empowers state governments to frame rules to prevent illegal mining.
  - While the MMDR Act provides a framework, the enforcement and regulation of illegal mining fall under state jurisdiction.

### Responsibility for Addressing Illegal Mining Placed on State Governments

- ✚ **Law and Order Issue:** Illegal mining is categorized as a law and order problem, which is a subject under the State List of the Constitution, making it the responsibility of state governments to address.
- ✚ **Limited Central Authority:** The Union government often shifts the responsibility to state authorities, citing the decentralized nature of governance in matters of local enforcement and regulation.

### What Factors Contribute to the Persistence of Illegal Coal Mining?

- ✚ **High Demand for Coal:** With coal accounting for 55% of India's energy needs, the high demand often exceeds legal supply leading to illegal mining activities.
- ✚ **Poverty and Unemployment:** Many coal-rich areas are home to impoverished populations who resort to illegal mining as a source of livelihood due to limited job opportunities.
- ✚ **Weak Regulatory Enforcement:** Inadequate monitoring and enforcement of mining regulations in remote areas allow illegal mining operations to flourish.
- ✚ **Political Patronage:** Allegations of political leaders' involvement in illegal mining operations complicate efforts to curb these activities, as seen in various states.

### What Safety Risks Do Workers Face?

- ✚ **Lack of Safety Equipment:** Workers often operate without helmets, masks, or other protective gear, significantly increasing their risk of injury or death.
- ✚ **Hazardous Working Conditions:** Illegal mines are typically unregulated, lacking proper structural support, making them vulnerable to cave-ins, landslides, and explosions.
- ✚ **Toxic Gas Exposure:** Miners are at risk of asphyxiation from inhaling toxic gases like carbon monoxide, as evidenced by recent fatalities in Gujarat.
  - Continuous exposure to coal dust and hazardous substances can lead to respiratory issues and chronic health conditions, further endangering workers' health.

### Conclusion:

- ✚ Need to implement advanced surveillance technologies, such as drones and satellite imaging, to monitor and detect illegal mining activities in real-time.

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ This can improve the efficiency of enforcement agencies in identifying and responding to illegal operations swiftly.

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2023

**Ques: With reference to coal-based thermal power plants in India, consider the following statements:**

1. None of them uses seawater.
2. None of them is set up in water-stressed district.
3. None of them is privately owned.

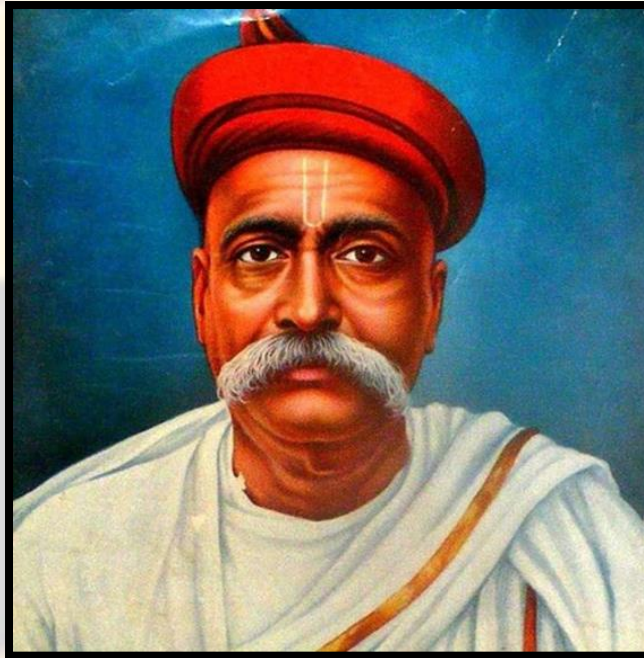
**How many of the above statements are correct?**

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

**Ans: d)**

**Personality In News : Lokmanya Tilak**

The Prime Minister recently paid tributes to Lokmanya Tilak on his birth anniversary.

**About Lokmanya Tilak:**

- + Bal Gangadhar Tilak, commonly known as Lokmanya Tilak, was a prominent Indian nationalist, freedom fighter, social reformer, and political leader during the Indian independence movement.
- + He was one of the prime architects of modern India and probably the strongest advocate of Swaraj, or Self Rule for India.
- + He is known for his slogan, "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it."
- + He was born as Keshav Gangadhar Tilak, and his followers bequeathed upon him the title of 'Lokmanya', meaning he who is revered by the people.
- + **Extremist:**
  - He was considered a radical Nationalist.
  - The British Government termed him the "Father of Indian Unrest".
- + **Organisations:**
  - He joined the Indian National Congress Party in 1890.
  - He also helped found the All India Home Rule League in 1916–18 with G. S. Khaparde and Annie Besant.
    - Tilak started his Home Rule League in Maharashtra, Central Provinces, and Karnataka and Berar region.
    - Besant's League was active in the rest of India.
    - It aimed to advocate for self-rule and raise public awareness about India's right to govern itself.

**+ Literary works:**

## Daily News Analysis

- Tilak was a prolific writer and journalist.
- He used his newspaper, "Kesari" (meaning Lion) in Marathi and later "Maratha" in English, to disseminate nationalist ideas.
- Some of his notable literary works include "The Arctic Home in the Vedas," where he presented his theory that the Vedas originated in the Arctic region, and "Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya," an interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita from a nationalist perspective.

### ✚ **Educationist:**

- Tilak believed in the power of education and established the Deccan Education Society in Pune in 1884.
- The society founded Fergusson College and the New English School, which played crucial roles in promoting modern education in Maharashtra.
- Tilak taught mathematics at Fergusson College.

✚ **Social Reform:** Lokmanya Tilak was also an advocate of social reform. He actively supported the eradication of social evils like untouchability and child marriage and promoted education for women.

✚ **Lal-Bal-Pal:** He had popular leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai as his political companions, and the three were popularly known as the 'Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate.'

✚ **Imprisonments:** He was arrested for sedition on multiple occasions. His most prolonged incarceration lasted from 1908 to 1914, during which he wrote the famous book "Gita Rahasya" (The Secret of the Bhagavad Gita).

✚ In 1916, he concluded the Lucknow Pact with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, which provided for Hindu-Muslim unity in the nationalist struggle.

## UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2019

**Ques : With reference to the Swadeshi Movement, consider the following statements:**

1. It contributed to the revival of the indigenous artisan crafts and industries.
2. The National Council of Education was established as a part of the Swadeshi Movement.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans : c)**

# 'Teaching mental well being will reduce suicides'

R. Sujatha

A recent article in the *Lancet* has once again turned the spotlight on suicide. Psychiatrists have been talking about ways to reduce suicides but rue the fact that governments, state and central, have shown little interest.

A blueprint to stem suicides, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, was launched in November 2022. The aim was to establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within three years and establish psychiatric outpatient departments to provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programmes in all districts within the next five years. It called for integrating a mental well-being curriculum into all educational institutions within eight years. It also sought to develop guidelines for responsible media reporting of suicides and restrict access to the means for suicide.

## Top killer

In India, more than 1 lakh lives are lost annually to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 years category. From 2019 to 2022,



In India, more than 1 lakh lives are lost annually to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 age group. GETTY IMAGES

the suicide rate increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000.

The NSSP envisages a specific strategy for every state and district. "We have explained the strategy, who should implement it, and the cascading effect. The ministry of health, education, and agriculture in each state must have a task force. We have provided short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. But two years later, nothing has happened," said Lakshmi Vijayakumar, who has been running a suicide prevention programme, Sneha, for four decades. The health department should take the lead, but other departments like fertilisers, chemicals, information and broadcasting should also be represented in the task force, she said.

The education department should be included to promote emotional wellbeing.

Soumitra Pathare, Director for Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy, one of the framers blames lack of political will.

## 'Sense of fatality'

"There is a sense of fatality when we start talking about suicide prevention. 'We cannot completely eliminate suicides', is what we hear. Instead of saying prevention we must say reduction. Even a 20% drop in suicides would save 40,000 lives annually," he remarked. He also blamed the lack of will in the media to make conscientious efforts to educate themselves on reporting suicides. By talking about suicides we would be acknowledging the problem

and try to find solutions, he reasoned.

Dr. Pathare and Dr. Lakshmi pointed out that it is likely the only health condition which claims 1.27 lakh lives but there is no government programme to prevent it. Dr. Pathare cited Tamil Nadu as an example where suicides had reduced thanks to supplementary examinations for school students. Yet the government has done nothing to implement NSPS. "The present approach is piecemeal. We need a district wise programme that can bring about consistent results," Dr. Pathare said. Dr. Lakshmi calls for several editions of competitive exams so youngsters gain confidence that they can appear whenever they want.

"The National Education Policy is good, but it has not been implemented. The vocational guidance programme and multiple exits, grade system, and the flexibility to make course changes are all good. But it has not been implemented," she said.

## Policy changes work

"I would like to emphasise that policy changes do make a difference and these policies are there and need to be implement-

ed. Once implemented, we see results. And the example is Tamil Nadu. "Tie up NEP and NSPS, and by implementing the strategies deaths can be reduced," she said.

Dheeraj Singh, an alumnus of the IIT Kanpur who mentors students from IITs, said: "Suicides can be prevented with timely supportive action. Citizens must learn the skills of identifying someone with suicidal thoughts, asking them openly about their thoughts, talking to them without fear, and referring them to a caregiver who can complete a safety plan and provide suicide prevention counselling. These steps, if taken with care person, can save many lives at risk."

(sujatha.r@thehindu.co.in)

(Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on the State's health helpline 104, Tele-MANAS 14416. and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050)



## For feedback

for 'Science', please write to [science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Daily page'

**GS Paper 02 : Governance and Social Justice : Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector****PYQ : (UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 2023): Why suicide among young women is increasing in Indian society?****(250 w/15m)****PYQ : (UPSC CSE (M) GS-4 2021): "We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves." – Dalai Lama.****(250 w/15m)****Context :**

- A recent article in the Lancet has once again turned the spotlight on suicide. Psychiatrists have been talking about ways to reduce suicides but rue the fact that governments, state and central, have shown little interest.

**Strategy to curb suicides**

- A blueprint to stem suicides, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, was launched in November 2022.
- The aim was to establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within three years and establish psychiatric outpatient departments to provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programmes in all districts within the next five years.
- It called for integrating a mental well-being curriculum into all educational institutions within eight years.
- It also sought to develop guidelines for responsible media reporting of suicides and restrict access to the means for suicide.

**Top killer**

- In India, more than 1 lakh lives are lost annually to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 years category.
- From 2019 to 2022, the suicide rate increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000.

## Daily News Analysis

- ✚ The NSSP envisages a specific strategy for every state and district.
- ✚ The ministry of health, education, and agriculture in each state must have a task force.
- ✚ The health department should take the lead, but other departments like fertilisers, chemicals, information and broadcasting should also be represented in the task force.
- ✚ The education department should be included to promote emotional wellbeing.
- ✚ Soumitra Pathare, Director for Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy, one of the framers blames lack of political will.

### 'Sense of fatality'

- ✚ There is a sense of fatality when we start talking about suicide prevention. Even a 20% drop in suicides would save 40,000 lives annually.
- ✚ The lack of will in the media to make conscientious efforts to educate themselves on reporting suicides.
- ✚ By talking about suicides we would be acknowledging the problem and try to find solutions.
- ✚ The present approach is piecemeal. We need a district wise programme that can bring about consistent results.
- ✚ The National Education Policy is good, but it has not been implemented.
- ✚ The vocational guidance programme and multiple exits, grade system, and the flexibility to make course changes are all good. But it has not been implemented.
- ✚ The policy changes do make a difference and these policies are there and need to be implemented.
- ✚ Tying up NEP and NSPS, and by implementing the strategies deaths can be reduced.

### Way forward

- ✚ Suicides can be prevented with timely supportive action. Citizens must learn the skills of identifying someone with suicidal thoughts, asking them openly about their thoughts, talking to them without fear, and referring them to a caregiver who can complete a safety plan and provide suicide prevention counselling.
- ✚ These steps, if taken with care person, can save many lives at risk.

### What is suicide?

- ✚ Suicide is when people harm themselves with the goal of ending their life, and they die as a result.
- ✚ A suicide attempt is when people harm themselves with the goal of ending their life, but they do not die.

## Data on suicide deaths in India:

- + In India, more than one lakh lives are lost every year to suicide, and it is the top killer in the 15-29 years category.
- + In the past three years, the suicide rate has increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 1,00,000 population, the document records.
- + The most common reasons for suicide include family problems and illnesses, which account for 34% and 18% of all suicide-related deaths.

## Treatments and Therapies:

### Brief Interventions

#### + Safety Planning:

- o Personalized safety planning has been shown to help reduce suicidal thoughts and actions.

#### + Follow-up phone calls:

- o Research has shown that when at-risk patients receive further screening, a Safety Plan intervention, and a series of supportive phone calls, their risk of suicide goes down.

## Psychotherapies:

#### + Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):

- o It can help people learn new ways of dealing with stressful experiences.
- o CBT helps individuals recognize their thought patterns and consider alternative actions when thoughts of suicide arise.

#### + Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):

- o It has been shown to reduce suicidal behavior in adolescents.

## India's First Suicide Prevention Policy

In 2022, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced a National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

## More about the policy

#### + About:

- o The newly launched National Suicide Prevention Strategy is the first of its kind in the country.
- o The suicide prevention policy comes with time-bound action plans and multi-sectoral collaborations to achieve reduction in suicide mortality by 10% 2030.



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- The strategy broadly seeks to:
  - Establish effective surveillance mechanisms for suicide within the next three years,
  - Establish psychiatric outpatient departments that will provide suicide prevention services through the District Mental Health Programme in all districts within the next five years, and
  - To integrate a mental well-being curriculum in all educational institutions within the next eight years.
- **The policy envisages:**
  - Developing guidelines for responsible media reporting of suicides, and
  - Restricting access to means of suicide.
- **Community & societal support:**
  - The stress is on developing community resilience and societal support for suicide prevention.
- ✚ **In line with global strategy:**
  - The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4 aims to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third, through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being.
  - One of the indicators for this is the suicide rate.
  - While the strategy is in line with the WHO's South East-Asia Region Strategy for suicide prevention, it says it will remain true to India's cultural and social milieu.

### Government of India Initiatives

- ✚ **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), 1982:**
  - To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population.
- ✚ **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 – Decriminalising suicide attempts:**
  - It was passed in 2017, came into effect in May 2018 and replaced the Mental Health Act of 1987.
  - To the joy of most Indian medical practitioners and advocates of mental health, the act decriminalised suicide attempts in India.
  - It also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
  - The most significant provision in the act was "advanced directives", which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to decide the course of their treatment and also appoint someone to be their representative.
  - It also restricted the use of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), and banned its use on minors, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.

## Manodarpan Initiative:

- + It is an initiative under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- + It aims to provide psycho-social support to students for their mental health and well-being.

## Kiran Helpline:

- + The helpline is a giant step towards suicide prevention, and can help with support and crisis management.
- + The helpline aims to provide early screening, first-aid, psychological support, distress management, mental well-being, and psychological crisis management and will be managed by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD).

## Issues & way ahead

### + **Focus not up to the mark:**

- o The recent National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report stated that 1.64 lakh people died by suicide in 2021.
- o This is 10 per cent higher than the COVID deaths in India 2020, and 6.8 times the maternal death (23800) in 2020.
- o Yet, we have had so much more focus and efforts on COVID protocols and maternal health as compared to suicide prevention.

### + **Need for collaborative efforts:**

- o Given that suicide is a complex issue, tackling it will necessarily require inter-sectoral collaboration.
- o The 2021 NCRB data shows that family issues (33.2 per cent), unemployment/indebtedness/career problems (7.7 percent), health concerns (18.6 percent) are some of the major causes.
- o To work on prevention, we need the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, the MoHFW, among others, to work collaboratively.

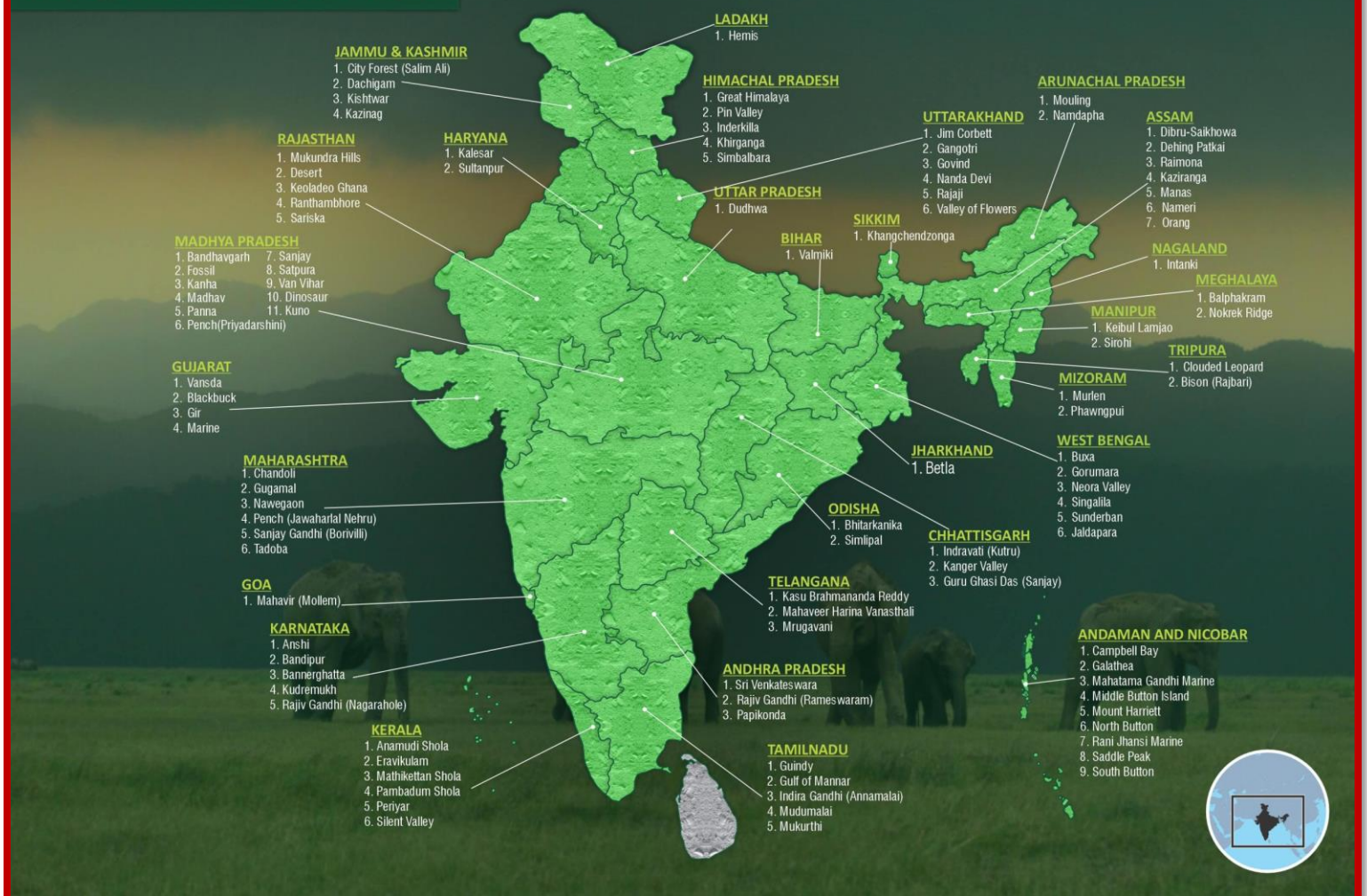
### + **Requirement of an effective implementation:**

- o The strategy should now be passed on to the States for them to develop locally relevant action plans; and then cascade to the district, primary health and community levels.
- o Further efforts are now required to prevent suicides as a public health priority.
- o Suicides impact all sections of the society and thus require concerted and collaborative efforts from individuals and the community at large.

## Mapping : National Parks of India

- They are the areas that are set by the government to conserve the natural environment.
- A national park has more restrictions as compared to a wildlife sanctuary.
- Their boundaries are fixed and defined.
- The main objective of a national park is to protect the natural environment of the area and biodiversity conservation.

### NATIONAL PARKS OF INDIA



### What is allowed and what is not allowed inside National Parks:

- Here, no human activity is allowed.
- Grazing of livestock and private tenurial rights are not permitted here.

## Daily News Analysis

- + Species mentioned in the Schedules of the Wildlife Act are not allowed to be hunted or captured.
- + No person shall destroy, remove, or exploit any wildlife from a National Park or destroy or damage the habitat of any wild animal or deprive any wild animal of its habitat within a national park.
- + They cannot be downgraded to the status of a 'sanctuary'.

### Declaration of National Parks:

- + National parks can be declared both by the Central Government and State governments. No alteration of the boundaries of a national park shall be made except on a resolution passed by the State Legislature.

### Important facts about the National Parks in India

- + Number of National 105
- + Total area covered 40,501 sq.km.
- + Maximum National Park state P. (9), Andaman & Nikobar (9)
- + First National Park Jim Corbett National Park
- + Largest National Park Hemis National Park
- + Smallest National Park South Button National Park
- + Latest National Park Kuno National Park

There are 104 existing national parks in India covering an area of 43,716 km<sup>2</sup>, which is 1.33% of the geographical area of the country

### State-wise National Parks list

Name of State	Name of Protected Area
<b>Goa</b>	Mollem
<b>Gujarat</b>	Blackbuck (Velavadar) Gir Marine (Gulf of Kachchh) Vansda
<b>Haryana</b>	Kalesar Sultanpur

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<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>	Great Himalayan Inderkilla Khirganga Pin Valley Col. Sherjung Simbalbara
<b>Jharkhand</b>	Betla
<b>Karnataka</b>	Anshi Bandipur Bannerghatta Kudremukh Nagarahole (Rajiv Gandhi)
<b>Kerala</b>	Anamudi Shola Eravikulam Mathikettan Shola Pambadum Shola Periyar Silent Valley
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>	Bandhavgarh Dinosaur Fossils Fossil Pench Kanha Kuno Madhav Panna Sanjay Satpura Van Vihar

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<b>Maharashtra</b>	Chandoli Gugamal Nawegaon Pench (Jawaharlal Nehru) Sanjay Gandhi (Borivilli) Tadoba
<b>Manipur</b>	Keibul-Lamjao Shiroi
<b>Meghalaya</b>	Balphakram Nokrek Ridge
<b>Mizoram</b>	Murlen Phawngpui (Blue Mountain)
<b>Nagaland</b>	Intanki
<b>Odisha</b>	Bhitarkanika Simlipal
<b>Rajasthan</b>	Desert Keoladeo Ghana Mukundra Hills Ranthambhore Sariska
<b>Sikkim</b>	Khangchendzonga
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	Guindy Gulf of Mannar Marine Indira Gandhi (Annamalai) Mudumalai Mukurthi
<b>Telangana</b>	Kasu Brahmananda Reddy Mahaveer Harina Vanasthali

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	Mrugavani
<b>Tripura</b>	Clouded Leopard Bison (Rajbari)
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	Dudhwa
<b>Uttarakhand</b>	Corbett Gangotri Govind Nanda Devi Rajaji Valley of Flowers
<b>West Bengal</b>	Buxa Gorumara Jaldapara Neora Valley Singalila Sunderban
<b>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands</b>	Campbell Bay Galathea Bay Mahatama Gandhi Marine (Wandoor) Mount Harriett Rani Jhansi Marine Saddle Peak
<b>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</b>	City Forest (Salim Ali) Dachigam Kazinag Kishtwar High Altitude
<b>Ladakh</b>	Hemis

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