



News Analysis (18 Mar, 2021)

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India's Act East Policy

Why in News

Recently, the Union Minister of State **Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)** said that connectivity is an important element of **Act East Policy**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The 'Act East Policy' announced in **November, 2014** is the upgrade of the "**Look East Policy**".
 - It is a **diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations** with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.
 - It involves **intensive and continuous engagement** with **Southeast Asian countries** in the field of **connectivity, trade, culture, defence and people-to-people-contact** at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.
- **Aim:**

To **promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and developing a strategic relationship** with countries in **Indo-pacific region** with a proactive and pragmatic approach and thereby **improving the economic development of the North Eastern Region (NER)** which is a gateway to the South East Asia Region.

Look East Policy

- In order to recover from the **loss of the strategic partner -USSR** (end of the Cold war 1991), India sought to build up a relationship with the USA and allies of the USA in Southeast Asia.
- In this pursuit, former Prime minister of India P V Narasimha Rao **launched Look East policy in 1992, to give a strategic push to India's engagement with the South-East Asia region**, to bolster its standing as a regional power and a **counterweight to the strategic influence of the People's Republic of China**.

- **Difference Between Look East and Act East:**

- **Look East:**

- Look East policy focused on the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** countries + Economic Integration.

- India became a **dialogue partner of ASEAN** in 1996 and summit level partner in 2002.
 - In 2012 the relationship got **up-graded into a Strategic Partnership**.
 - The time when India launched the Look East Policy in 1992, India's trade with ASEAN was USD 2 billion. After signing the Free Trade Agreement in 2010 with ASEAN, the **trade has grown to USD 72 billion (2017-18)**.
 - India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the **East Asia Summit (EAS)**, **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)** etc.

- **Act East:**

- Act East Policy focused on ASEAN countries + Economic Integration + **East Asian countries + Security cooperation**.

- Prime minister of India highlighted **4C's of Act East Policy**.

- Culture
 - Commerce
 - Connectivity
 - Capacity building
 - Security is an important dimension of India's Act East Policy.
 - In the context of growing Chinese assertiveness in the **South China Sea** and the Indian Ocean, **securing freedom of navigation and India's own role in the Indian Ocean** is a key feature of Act East Policy.
 - In pursuance of this, India has been engaged under the narrative of Indo-pacific and informal grouping called **Quad**.

- **Initiatives to Enhance Connectivity:**

- **Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link** between India and Bangladesh.

- Intermodal transport linkages and **inland waterways through Bangladesh**.

- **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project** and the **Trilateral Highway Project** connecting the North East with Myanmar and Thailand.

- Under **India-Japan Act East Forum**, projects such as **Road and Bridges** and modernization of **Hydro-electric power projects** have been undertaken.

- **India-Japan Act East Forum** was established in 2017 which aims to provide a platform for India-Japan collaboration under the rubric of India's "Act East Policy" and Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy".
 - The Forum will **identify specific projects for economic modernization of India's North-East region** including those pertaining to connectivity, developmental infrastructure, industrial linkages as well as people-to-people contacts through tourism, culture and sports-related activities.

- **Other Initiatives:**

- Assistance extended in the form of **medicines/medical supplies to ASEAN countries during the pandemic.**
- Scholarships with offers of 1000 PhD fellowships have been offered at IITs for ASEAN countries participants.
- India is also implementing **Quick Impact Projects** in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam to provide development assistance to grass-root level communities in the fields of education, water resources, health etc.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) are small-scale, low cost projects that are planned and implemented within a short timeframe.



India Acts East

With its Act East policy, India hopes to deepen its political, economic and security relationships with the countries of Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific. Balancing against the rise of China is a key driver.

China: India views the rise of its principal strategic rival as a serious challenge and is forging relations with countries along its periphery to maintain the balance between them

ASEAN: Boosting exports with the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a core plank of Modi's Act East policy
Australia: China's rise has compelled India's outreach to Australia to forge a stronger defense partnership

Australia: China's rise has compelled Indian outreach to forge a stronger defense partnership

Japan: The key regional power shares India's concerns over China's expansion

Northeast India: New Delhi wishes for its remote northeastern wing to serve as a trading hub that connects to Southeast Asia through Myanmar

South Korea: India wants to deepen trade, investment and security ties with this regional economic power

Source:PIB

The Appropriation Bill

Why in News

Recently, the Lok Sabha cleared the **Appropriation Bill**, allowing the Central government to **draw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India**.

Key Points

- **About:**

Appropriation Bill **gives power to the government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India** for meeting the expenditure during the financial year.

- As per **article 114** of the Constitution, the government can withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund only after receiving approval from Parliament.
- The amount withdrawn is used to meet the current **expenditure during the financial year**.

- **Procedure Followed:**

- **The Appropriation Bill is introduced in the Lok Sabha** after discussions on Budget proposals and Voting on Demand for Grants.

The defeat of an Appropriation Bill in a parliamentary vote would **lead to the resignation of a government** or a general election.

- Once it is passed by the Lok Sabha it is sent to the **Rajya Sabha**.

Power of Rajya Sabha:

It has the power to **recommend any amendments** in this Bill.

However, it is the prerogative of the **Lok Sabha to either accept or reject the recommendations** made by the Rajya Sabha.

- After the bill receives **assent** from the **president** it becomes an **Appropriation act**.

The unique feature of the Appropriation Bill is its **automatic repeal clause**, whereby the Act gets repealed by itself after it meets its statutory purpose.

- The government **cannot withdraw money** from the Consolidated Fund of India **till the enactment of the appropriation bill**. However, this takes time and the government needs money to carry on its normal activities. To meet the immediate expenses the **Constitution has authorised the Lok Sabha to make any grant in advance** for a part of the financial year. This provision is known as the '**Vote on Account**'.

Vote on Account

- **About:**
A vote on account, as defined by **Article 116** of the Indian Constitution, is a **grant in advance** for the central government to **meet short-term expenditure** needs from the Consolidated Fund of India, generally **lasting for a few months** till the new financial year kicks in.
 - **Need:**
During an election year the Government either opts for **‘interim Budget’** or for **‘Vote on Account’** as after the election the Ruling Government may change and so the policies.
 - **Amendment:**
No amendment can be proposed to an Appropriation Bill **which will have the effect of varying the amount or altering the destination of any grant** so made or of varying the amount of any expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of India, and the **decision of the Lok Sabha Speaker as to whether such an amendment is admissible is final.**
 - **Appropriation Bill vs Finance Bill:**
 - While the **Finance Bill** contains provisions on financing the expenditure of the government, an **Appropriation Bill** specifies the quantum and purpose for withdrawing money.
 - Both appropriation and finance bills are classified as **money bills** which do not require the explicit consent of the Rajya Sabha. The **Rajya Sabha only discusses them and returns the bills.**
- Money Bill:**
- A Bill is said to be a Money Bill if it only **contains provisions related to taxation, borrowing of money by the government, expenditure from or receipt** to the Consolidated Fund of India.
 - Bills that only contain **provisions that are incidental to these matters** would also be regarded as Money Bills.

Consolidated Fund of India

- It was constituted under **Article 266 (1)** of the Constitution of India.
- It is made up of:
 - All **revenues received** by the Centre by way of taxes (Income Tax, Central Excise, Customs and other receipts) and all non-tax revenues.
 - All **loans raised** by the Centre by issue of Public notifications, treasury bills (internal debt) and from foreign governments and international institutions (external debt).
- All **government expenditures are incurred from this fund** (except exceptional items which are met from the Contingency Fund or the Public Account) and no amount can be withdrawn from the Fund without authorization from the Parliament.
- The **Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG)** audits the fund and reports to the relevant legislatures on the management.

Stages of Budget in the parliament

- Presentation of Budget.
- General discussion.
- Scrutiny by Departmental Committees.
- Voting on Demands for Grants.
- Passing an Appropriation Bill.
- Passing of Finance Bill.

Source:TH

World Air Quality Report 2020

Why in News

The **World Air Quality Report**, prepared by **Swiss organisation IQAir**, mentions that **22 of the top 30 most polluted cities globally are in India.**

The Report **aggregated PM2.5 data from 106 countries.**

PM 2.5

- It is an atmospheric particulate matter of diameter of fewer than 2.5 micrometres, which is around 3% the diameter of a human hair.
- It causes respiratory problems and also reduces visibility. It is an endocrine disruptor that can affect insulin secretion and insulin sensitivity, thus contributing to diabetes.
- It is very small and can only be detected with the help of an electron microscope.
- Some are emitted directly from a source, such as construction sites, unpaved roads, fields, smokestacks or fires.
- Most particles form in the atmosphere as a result of complex reactions of chemicals such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which are pollutants emitted from power plants, industries and automobiles.

Key Points

- **World Capital City Ranking:**
Delhi has been ranked as the **world's most polluted capital city** followed by **Dhaka (Bangladesh), Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia), Kabul (Afghanistan), Doha (Qatar).**
- **World Country Ranking:**
 - **Bangladesh** has been ranked as the **most polluted country** followed by **Pakistan and India.**
 - The **least polluted country** is **Puerto Rico**, followed by **New Caledonia, US Virgin Islands** respectively.

- **World City Ranking:**
 - **Hotan in China** is the **most polluted city** with an average concentration of 110.2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ followed by **Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh at 106.**
- **Indian Scenario:**
 - Shows a **boost in Delhi's air quality** by approximately **15% from 2019 to 2020.**
 - Delhi has been listed as the **10th most polluted city** and the **top polluted capital city in the world.**
 - **Ghaziabad is the second most polluted city in the world** followed by Bulandshahar, Bisrakh Jalalpur, Bhiwadi, Noida, Greater Noida, Kanpur and Lucknow.
 - Compared to **north Indian cities**, the cities in the **Deccan recorded relatively better air quality**, remaining above the daily WHO limits of 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for most part of 2020.
 - However, **every city in India observed air quality improvements compared to 2018 and earlier**, while 63% saw direct improvements against 2019.
 - **Major sources of India's air pollution** include transportation, biomass burning for cooking, electricity generation, industry, construction, waste burning, and episodic agricultural burning.
 - 2020 was a particularly **severe year for agricultural burning** in which farmers set fire to crop residue after a harvest. **Farm fires in Punjab increased 46.5% over 2019.**
- **Covid and Its Impact :**
 - In 2020, the spread of Covid-19 raised new concerns as **exposure to particle pollution was found to increase vulnerability to the virus and its impact on health.**
 - Early reports suggest that the **proportion of Covid-19 deaths attributed to air pollution exposure ranges from 7% to 33%.**

Air Pollution in Delhi

- Air pollution in Delhi-NCR and the Indo Gangetic Plains is a complex phenomenon that is dependent on a variety of factors.
- **Change in Wind Direction:**
 - October usually marks the withdrawal of **monsoons** in Northwest India and during this time, the predominant direction of winds is northwesterly.
 - The direction of the wind is northwesterly in summers as well, which brings the dust from northern Pakistan and Afghanistan.

- **Reduced Wind Speed:**
 - High-speed winds are very effective at dispersing pollutants, but winters bring a dip in wind speed overall as compared to in summers which makes the region prone to pollution.
 - Also, Delhi lies in a landlocked region which does not have a geographical advantage that eastern, western or southern parts of the country enjoy where the sea breeze disperses the concentrated pollutants.
- **Stubble Burning:**
 - **Stubble burning in Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana is blamed for causing a thick blanket of smog in Delhi during winters.**
It emits large amounts of toxic pollutants in the atmosphere which contain harmful gases like methane (CH₄), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.
 - Farm fires have been an easy way to get rid of paddy stubble quickly and at low cost for several years.
- **Vehicular Pollution:**
It is **one of the biggest causes of dipping air quality in Delhi** in winters and around 20% of **PM_{2.5}** in winters comes from it.
- **Dust Storms:**
 - **Dust storms from Gulf countries enhance the already worse condition.**
Dry cold weather means dust is prevalent in the entire region, which does not see many rainy days between October and June.
 - **Dust pollution contributes to around 56% of PM₁₀** and the PM_{2.5} load.
- **Dip in Temperatures:**
As temperature dips, the **inversion height is lowered and the concentration of pollutants in the air increases** when this happens.
Inversion height is the layer beyond which pollutants cannot disperse into the upper layer of the atmosphere.
- **Firecrackers:**
Despite the **ban on cracker sales, firecrackers are a common sight on Diwali.** It may not be the top reason for air pollution, but it definitely contributed to its build-up.
- **Construction Activities and Open Waste Burning:**
Large-scale construction in Delhi-NCR is another culprit that is increasing dust and pollution in the air. Delhi also has landfill sites for the dumping of waste and burning of waste in these sites also contributes to air pollution.

Major Measures Taken

- **Subsidy to farmers for buying Turbo Happy Seeder (THS)** which is a machine mounted on a tractor that cuts and uproots the stubble, in order to reduce stubble burning.

- The **introduction of BS-VI vehicles**, push for **electric vehicles** (EVs), **Odd-Even** as an emergency measure and **construction of the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways to reduce vehicular pollution**.
- **Implementation** of the **Graded Response Action Plan** (GRAP) to tackle the rising pollution in the Capital. It includes measures like shutting down thermal power plants and a ban on construction activities.
- **Development of the National AQI** for public information under the aegis of the **Central Pollution Control Board** (CPCB). AQI has been developed for eight pollutants viz. PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, Ammonia, Lead, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, ozone, and carbon monoxide.

Way Forward

- Appropriate political will and aware citizenry is a prerequisite to tackle the menace, otherwise, all the measures will remain on paper only and greater public transparency is essential to the success of winning the war on air pollution.
- There is no better watchdog than active citizens, which is why the pollution targets must be made public every year for their perusal and to be evaluated at the end of the year.
- Breathing clean air is a fundamental right of every Indian citizen. Therefore, human health must become a priority when it comes to tackling air pollution.

Source: IE

India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Women's Forum Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the **Sixth India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Women's Forum** meeting was held virtually.

India is the current chair of IBSA Dialogue Forum.

Key Points

- **Highlights from the Meeting:**

- Recalled that the Year 2020 marked-
 - **The 25th anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDFA):** The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action **flagged 12 key areas** where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. It also laid out concrete ways for countries to bring about change.
 - **The 5th anniversary of adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development & Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):** **Goal 5** aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private sphere.
 - **The 20th anniversary of UNSC RESOLUTION 1325 on women, peace and security.**
 - **A Decade since UN WOMEN was established:** UN Women is the **United Nations (UN)** organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 2010.
- Lauded the efforts of Government of India in helping out other countries to overcome the challenges posed by **Covid-19** pandemic by providing vaccines, masks, sanitizers, PPE Kits etc.

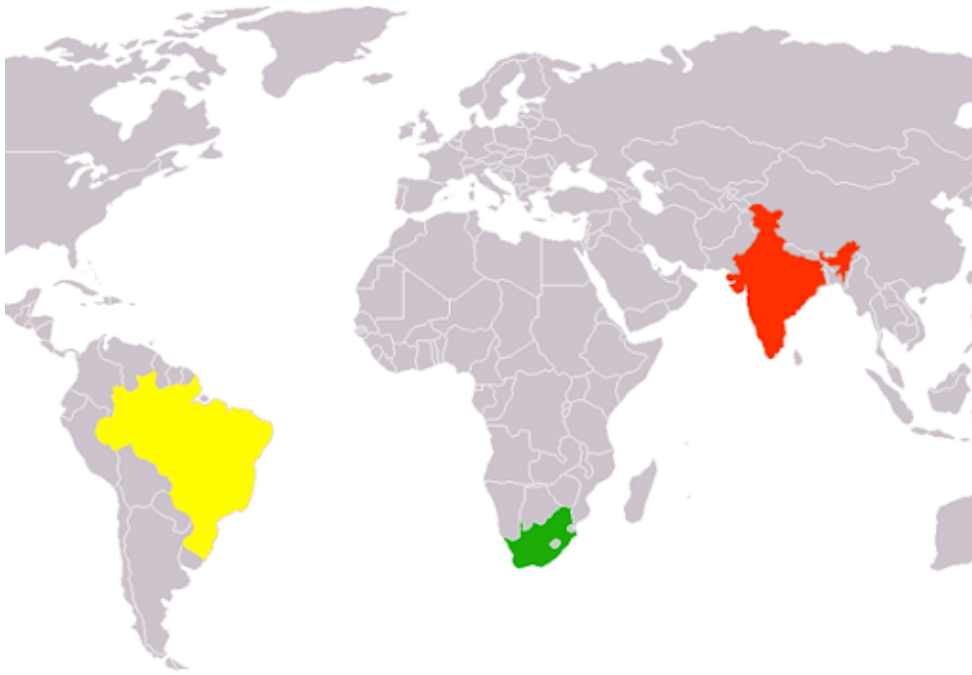
- **India's Effort for Women Empowerment:**

- **Equal rights for men and women** are enshrined under **Articles 14 to 16 in the Indian constitution.**
- It **signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** in 1980 and ratified it in 1993 with some reservations.
- The **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961** and the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** have been enacted to criminalise instances of dowry and domestic violence.
- The government also **increased maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks** under the **Maternity Benefit Act** in 2017 for the private sector.
- The **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013** has been enacted covering all the women, in spite of their age and employment status, and protects them from **sexual harassment at workplaces**, in both the public and private sectors of the industry where the women are employed.
- Another milestone was reached when the **Supreme Court upended the government's position on women serving as army commanders in 2020.**
- **Efforts to pass the Women's Reservation Bill** which gives **33%** reservation for women seats in all levels of Indian politics.
- Flagship schemes to promote gender equality, including **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter), **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** (a scheme to provide gas connections to women from below the poverty line households) and Mahila-E-Haat (which uses technology to support female entrepreneurs).

While India has taken some measures on human development, its global standing on gender equality remains low. India's **ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report**, commissioned by the World Economic Forum, **declined from 108th in 2018 to 112th in 2020.**

India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum

About: The IBSA Dialogue Forum is a **tripartite grouping (India, Brazil, South Africa)** for promoting cooperation among these countries.



- **Formation:** The grouping was formalized and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia (Brazil) on 6th June 2003 and issued the **Brasilia Declaration**.
- **Headquarters:** IBSA does not have a headquarters or a permanent executive secretariat. At the highest level, it **counts on the Summits of Heads of State and Government**.

So far Five IBSA Leadership Summits have been held. The 5th IBSA Summit was held in Pretoria (South Africa) in 2011. The **6th IBSA Summit is to be hosted by India**.
- **IBSA Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger**, established in 2004, is a unique Fund through which development projects are executed with IBSA funding in fellow developing countries.
 - Till date IBSA has supported 31 projects in 20 partner developing countries in the areas of safe drinking water, agriculture and livestock, solar energy, waste management, health etc., with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the SDGs (earlier MDGs).
 - The IBSA Fund has been the **recipient of several key recognitions** including the UN South-South Partnership Award in 2006 (for projects in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau), an MDG Award for South-South Cooperation in 2010 and the South-South Champions Award in 2012 recognizing the work of the three countries in using innovative approaches to share development experiences in other parts of the world.
- **Joint naval exercise IBSAMAR** (IBSA Maritime Exercise) is an important part of IBSA trilateral defence cooperation. Six editions of IBSAMAR have been held so far, the latest one being off the coast of South Africa in October, 2018.

SOURCE: PIB

UDAN 4.1

Why in News

On the commencement of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav ()', the **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)** has proposed about **392 routes under UDAN 4.1 bidding process**.

Key Points

- **About UDAN 4.1:**
 - The UDAN 4.1 focuses on connecting smaller airports, along with special helicopter and seaplane routes.
 - Some new routes have been proposed under the **Sagarmala Seaplane services**
Sagarmala Seaplane Services is an ambitious project under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** with potential airline operators.
One such seaplane service is already in operation between Kevadia and Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad, which was started in October 2020.
- **About UDAN Scheme:**
 - Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) was **launched as a regional connectivity scheme** under the Ministry of Civil Aviation **in 2016**.
 - It is an innovative scheme to **develop the regional Aviation market**.
 - The objective of the scheme is to create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
 - The scheme envisages providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports of the country through the revival of existing air-strips and airports. The scheme is **operational for a period of 10 years**.
Under-served airports are those which do not have more than one flight a day, while unserved airports are those where there are no operations.
 - Financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and under-served airports, and keep airfares affordable.
 - Till date, 325 routes and 56 airports including 5 heliports and 2 water aerodromes have been operationalised under the scheme.
- **UDAN 1.0:**

Under this phase, 5 airlines companies were awarded 128 flight routes to 70 airports (including 36 newly made operational airports).
- **UDAN 2.0:**
 - In 2018, the Ministry of Civil Aviation announced 73 underserved and unserved airports.
 - For the first time, helipads were also connected under phase 2 of the UDAN scheme.

- **UDAN 3.0:**
 - Inclusion of Tourism Routes under UDAN 3 in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism.
 - Inclusion of Seaplanes for connecting Water Aerodromes.
 - Bringing in a number of routes in the North-East Region under the ambit of UDAN.
- **UDAN 4.0:**
 - In 2020, 78 new routes were approved under the 4th round of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UdeDeshKaAamNagrik (UDAN) to further enhance the connectivity to remote & regional areas of the country.
 - Kavaratti, Agatti, and Minicoy islands of Lakshadweep will be connected by the new routes of UDAN 4.0.

Source: PIB

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve: Uttar Pradesh

Why in News

A carcass of a five-year-old tigress was found in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (Uttar Pradesh).

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is **located in Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh.**
 - It was **notified as Tiger Reserve in 2014.**
 - In 2020, it bagged **international award TX2** for doubling up the number of tigers in the past four years.
 - It forms the part of **Terai Arc Landscape** in the **upper Gangetic Plain.**
 - The **northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border** while the **southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.**
- **Flora and Fauna:**
 - It is home to a habitat for over 127 animals, 326 bird species and 2,100 flowering plants.
 - It has high **sal forests**, plantation and grasslands with several water bodies.
- **Other Protected Areas in Uttar Pradesh**

Terai Arc Landscape

- The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) is **an 810 km stretch between the river Yamuna in the west and the river Bhagmati in the east.**
 - Bhagmati River** is a river in south-central Nepal and northern Bihar state.

- Comprises the **Shivalik hills**, the adjoining **bhabhar areas** and the **Terai flood plains**.
 - The **bhabhar** is that part of the Indian Northern Plains where the rivers, after descending from the mountains, deposit pebbles. It is a narrow belt, having a width of about 8 to 16 km and lying parallel to the slopes of the Shiwaliks.
 - All the streams disappear in this bhabhar belt. South of this belt, the streams and rivers re-emerge and **create a wet, swampy and marshy region known as terai**.
- It is **spread across the Indian states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**, and the **low lying hills of Nepal**.
- It boasts of **some of India's most well-known Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas** such as **Corbett Tiger Reserve** (Uttarakhand), **Rajaji National Park** (Uttarakhand), **Dudhwa Tiger Reserve** (Uttar Pradesh), **Valmiki Tiger Reserve** (Bihar).
- In total, **the landscape has 13 Protected Areas, 9 in India and 4 in Nepal**, covering a total area of 49,500 km², of which **30,000km² lies in India**.
- The forests are **home to three flagship species**, the **Bengal tiger** (*Panthera tigris*), the **greater one horned rhino** (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) and the **Asian elephant** (*Elephas maximus*).

Source:IE
